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THE ARMS OF DAUPHINÉ





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## GRENOBLE & THEREABOUTS

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Uriage-les-Bains, Allevard, Trièves,  
Salette, Laffrey.



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GRENOBLE



# GRENOBLE AND THEREABOUTS

CHARTREUSE, OISANS, VERCORS,  
BELLEDONE, URIAGE-LES-BAINS,  
ALLEVARD, TRIÈVES, SALETTE,  
LAFFREY : *by* HENRI FERRAND

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*Grenoble — The Belledonne range.*

## PREFACE

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On the second of May 1889 several eminent citizens of Grenoble founded an association with the object of studying and putting into effect the best means of attracting tourists to Dauphiné. The leaders in this enterprise were MM. Jullien-Février, de Montal, Merceron, Chabrand and de Maisonville. They hit on the happy thought of calling their association the *Syndicat d'Initiative* of Grenoble and Dauphiné. In their first formation the names of MM. de Montal as president, Chabrand as treasurer, Paul Michoud as secretary, Georges Charpenay, etc., appeared. From the beginning, their programme was so satisfactory that the undertaking has been continued up to the present on exactly the same lines, and the successive presidents, taking office in rotation, de Montal, Chabrand, Michoud, have reaped the reward of their energy and public spirit by making Grenoble the unchallenged capital, the metropolis of our Alps.

The example of these pioneers has been followed. Today there are more than five hundred Syndicats d'Initiative in France. For the most part they have prospered, and they form the fundamental basis of that hospitality to travellers which has become one of our national forces. But they all, without exception, recognise that

Grenoble was the pioneer; they all acknowledge the first and the oldest of the Syndicats; they all regard Grenoble as the Mecca of French tourists. They look towards Grenoble with the eyes of true believers and from Grenoble they draw their inspiration.

The efforts made by the people of Grenoble were primarily a homage paid to their native town. No city in the world can rival the capital of Dauphiné in picturesqueness, and no city is surrounded by such incomparable beauty. She is the worthy capital of the Alps, this town where everything suggests the mountains and they are visible on all sides. Wherever you turn they are before your eyes. At the end of every street and from every open space, either Belledonne or la Chartreuse or Vercors beckon to you imperiously. In the centre of the town there is the lively Place Grenette which is always animated, because it is the exit from the main station for tourists. Thence, every day, swarms of vehicles, once upon a time carriages, nowadays swift and comfortable motor cars, carry thousands of tourists off on the most wonderful excursions. The two great alpine torrents, the Isère and the Drac, mingle their waters



*Near Grenoble, the plain in the evening.*





*Grenoble — Néron.*

almost within the town itself. It is well nigh impossible to go through Grenoble, whatever your business, without falling to the overmastering temptation held out by Lautaret, Bérarde, the Chartreuse, Grands-Goulets and the Forêt de Lente. And if you are a mountaineer, where is there such a choice of beautiful and impressive peaks as those of Belledonne, Sept-Laux, Étendard, Aiguilles d'Arves, Oisans, the incomparable Meidje, Pelvoux, Écrins, Olan, and so many others whose praises have been sung by the great pioneers of modern travel, the members of the London Alpine Club, of the French Alpine Club and of the Société des Touristes du Dauphiné ?

The view of Grenoble and its encircling mountains, which you get coming down from Sappey, or from St-Nizier, is one of those magnificent natural spectacles which no one can behold without emotion and which I, personally, consider unrivalled. The panorama beggars all description, every feature merges into a harmonious whole. The fertile valley of Graisivaudan looks like a carpet spread around Grenoble, through which the glittering thread of the Isère winds. The vast plain rises imperceptibly to the opening of the far-off mountain valleys, and frames the bastions of Étendard, Obiou, Taillefer, and of Vercors. The dazzling foreground of Belledonne





*Grenoble — Saint-Eynard.*

and its bold turrets and the grand wall of the Chartreuse group towering dizzily above Grenoble are the very heart of all this picturesque, the miraculous crown of the surrounding glory.

It is not astonishing that such a town has found poets to sing its beauty. One among them has devoted his life to the exploration and description of his native Dauphiné, and every page of his work breathes his burning love for his homeland. No one could be better qualified than Henri FERRAND for writing this charming book, whose text and illustrations are such a perfect tribute to Grenoble. You will permit me, at the risk of offending his modesty, to say here all that French tourists think of this valiant pioneer, of this untiring protagonist of our ideas. Among lovers of the mountains there are many who only love selfishly and who frown on those who attempt to popularize their beauties. Henri FERRAND loves the mountains for themselves, and, longing for them to be appreciated, has always carried on an intense propaganda. His love for the French Alps is inspired by the purest patriotism. He is one of those who wish to make the whole world realize that there is in France beauty equal to the

most famous foreign resorts; he is one of those who have triumphantly proved that from Mont-Blanc to Viso, our mountainous region is the worthy peer of Switzerland. Finally, he has, by his writing and his words made himself the ardent protector of beauty against vandalism, and his devoted advocacy has saved from the dangers of greed and of human stupidity many of the most beautiful spots in his native Dauphiné, which already owes him so much.

Grenoble, capital of the French Alps! The privilege of writing of its beauty is the incontestable right of Henri FERRAND.

We shall read his book with the warmest admiration, feeling that we have a treat in store, all the more so because we know that the heart of the author is pledged fully to his subject. And yet once again France as well as Dauphiné will recognize its debt towards the good citizen whose name appears on the title-page of this book.

Léon AUSCHER

Président du Comité de Tourisme en Montagne  
du Touring Club de France.







*Grenoble — La Montée Chalemont.*





*Grenoble and Moucherotte.*

## CHAPTER I.

### Grenoble

---

*Its history and situation — The town — Its monuments and institutions.*

In the first dawn of history Grenoble appears under the name of Cularo. Our earliest document, the letter from Munacius Plancus to Cicero, is dated from Cularo, *in finibus Allobrogum* (from the Allobrogian frontier), in the year 43 B. C. It is generally acknowledged that, in the year 218 B. C., Cularo saw the army of Hannibal passing on his way to conquer Italy, but it only appears again unquestionably on the great chart of the military roads of the Roman Empire, a reproduction of the *Orbis pictus* of Agrippa, (in the first years of the Christian era) of which a copy that has been touched up considerably has survived to the present day, under the



*Courtyard of an old house, rue Chenoise, No. 10  
(XVIth Century).*

name of Table de Peutinger. By one of those errors in transcription which are so frequent in old manuscripts, it appears here in the form of Culabone. There is no other documentary evidence.

“ Camp of the Roman Generals ”, “ halting-place on the Roman road ” were sufficiently vague designations and would have made it difficult to identify the ancient Cularo and the modern Grenoble with certainty, if, towards the third century, the growing importance of this settlement had

not led the conquerors to surround it with walls, to strengthen their rule. This work, which must have taken several years, was finished about the year 290, in the reign of the Emperor Diocletian. We have proof of this in the inscriptions which were above the two gates of the walls, the Porte Jovienne and the Porte Herculéenne. These inscriptions were transcribed and preserved when the ramparts were demolished. The one on the Porte Jovienne was as follows :



---

DD. NN. IMPP. CAES. CAIVS AVREL.  
 VALERIVS DIOCLETIANVS  
 PF. INVICTVS  
 AVG. ET. CAESAR MARC. AVREL.  
 VALERIVS MAXIMIANVS  
 PF. INVICTVS AVG.  
 MVRIS CVLARONENSIBVS  
 CVM INTERIORIBVS AEDIFICIIS  
 PROVIDENTIA SVA INSTITVTIS  
 ADQVE PERFECTIS  
 PORTAM ROMANAM IOVIAM  
 VOCARI IVSSE RVNT.

The only difference in the inscription on the Porte Herculéenne lies in the last line which reads :

PORTAM VIENNENSEM HERCVLEAM  
 VOCARI IVSSE RVNT.

In the shelter of these walls, whose site has been reconstructed exactly, Cularo grew and developed. Like all Roman settle-

ments, it was beautified with temples, monuments, baths and theatres; many inscriptions have been collected, but there is no real evidence for them and all reconstruction of that kind is purely a matter of imagination.

The Porte Jovienne or Romaine, which was called the Porte Traine, was at the end of the Grande Rue, near the modern Place Grenette. There the Roman road of Oisans, the road from Italy, descended from the heights of Jarrie. This gate was destroyed in 1591, at the time when a new rampart was built by Lesdi-

*Turret of the Hôtel-de-Ville.*



*Tower of the Hôtel-de-Ville.*





guières. The Porte Herculéenne or Viennoise, later called Porte de l'Évêché, was situated near the western extremity of the Place Notre-Dame, and survived until 1804. The road, which crossed the bridge over the Isère, went up the mountain of Chalemont (*Scala montis*) to descend again towards Saint-Martin-le-Vinoux and on to Vienne, the capital of the province, began there.

The walls were strengthened by many towers, one of which still survives and forms the base of the Tour des Archives de l'Hôtel-de-Ville. At a later period a third opening was made, not a gate but a kind of little postern, which opened into the rue Pertuisière, the modern rue Alphan.

Cularo was already the seat of a garrison of sufficient importance for it to be included in the *Notitia dignitatum*, when, at the end of the fourth century, the rank of Civitas was conferred on it by the Emperor Gratian from whom it took its name: *Civitas Gratianopolitana*. It was this name of Gratianopolitana — a blend of Greek and Latin and thoroughly typical



*Porte St.-Laurent.*



*The Old Pont de Claix (1610).*

of the degeneracy of the language of the period — which, passing through various transformations like Graianople and Grainople, became Grenoble. At the same time Christianity, which had just reached the Gauls, instituted a bishopric there, and among the *Pères du concile d'Aquilée*, in 381, an *Episcopus Gratianopolitanus* figured.

The fall of the Roman Empire does not appear to have had any very serious consequences for Grenoble. Sheltered by its powerful ramparts, the town no doubt witnessed many vicissitudes resulting from the conflicting ambitions of the time, and the magnificent Frankish casque found at Vézeronce and preserved in the Grenoble Museum, is an eloquent testimony to the strife which devastated the country. But

we must class as legendary the old story of the terms exacted by the Paladin Roland, Charlemagne's nephew, for raising the blockade when the city was besieged by the Saracens, or even of recapturing it from them, after building the Tour sans Venin. Even the tradition that Bishop Izarn had to reconquer his diocese from the heathen in the tenth century is very questionable. But we emerge again into the realm of history when we find two powers struggling for supremacy from the eleventh



*Merovingian helmet found at Vézeronce (Isère).*



century onwards : the Bishops of Grenoble on one side, and on the other the Counts of Albon, who were gradually becoming the Lords of Dauphiné.

It is useless to trace here the famous controversy about the origin of the name Dauphin ; in the twelfth century the rule of these princes was firmly established in Grenoble, which became the capital of a little State, and we know that in the fourteenth century the last Dauphin, Humbert II, ceded it to France.

The appearance of the town at that time is familiar from a kind of bird's-eye-view map which its consuls ordered Prévost to make in 1572, and sent to



*Rue Barnave No. 22.  
House of François Marc.  
Inner Courtyard (XVIth Century).*

François de Belleforest who published it in his version of the *Cosmographie de Sébastien Munster*, in 1575.

Partially destroyed by the flood of 1219, ruined by the religious wars, decimated by innumerable epidemics, Grenoble was hardly able to profit by the impetus it received from the prudent administration of Lesdiguières. However he did, as we have seen, raise new walls (which were not finished until long after his

death); he undertook great defensive works against the floods, diverted the bed of the Drac which until then had washed the eastern base of the ramparts, and turned one of its tributaries, the Draquet, into the Place Grenette. It was in this period that the construction of the Pont

de Claix was taken up again, under the direction of Jean de Beins, the engineer of Lesdiguières, followed several years later by the creation of the beautiful promenade which links the bridge to the town and which took its name from the instigator of the scheme, the président de Saint-André.

In spite of important improvements, for a long time Grenoble scarcely developed at all, and towards the end of the eighteenth century its population was reduced to barely 10,000 inhabitants. The shock of the French Revolution which is said to have originated in the assemblies of Vizille and Romans in Dauphiné, the



*Rue Barnave No. 22.  
House of François Marc.,  
Conseiller au Parlement (XVIIth Century)*

wars of the First Empire, the strife and reaction at the restoration, were so favourable to it that the walls of Lesdiguières became so obviously inadequate that they had to be replaced. In 1836 new ramparts were completed, which more than doubled the superficial area of Grenoble, and this was only a stop-gap. In 1855 the census disclosed a population of 32,000 inhabitants in Grenoble. The construction of

the metalled roads which radiated out from it increased its importance to such a point that, in spite of the check owing to the misfortunes of 1870, a further enlargement was essential. The walls of 1880 enclose an area of more than three square kilometres, and the town contains more than 80,000 inhabitants today.



This important development has spread freely over the vast plain which extends to the juncture of the Isère and the Drac. Two old quarters of the town, that of Saint-Laurent and that of Perrière, nestling below the slopes of the Rachais, the last spur of the Chartreuse range, are stretched along the right bank. The old Roman city, with its tall and narrow houses, like the new town, with its magnificent buildings and splendid planning, stretches charmingly over the delta of the left bank.

The view of Grenoble, surrounded by its girdle of mountains, brightened by its river, filled with air and sunshine, with its streams of pure and healthy water, is a marvellously impressive sight. Nowhere can you find a spectacle equal to the superb panorama which, stretching from Mont-Blanc to the Dent de Montaut, unfolds itself in a semicircle round the city.

The endless changes have prevented the town from preserving more than a few of its old buildings and monuments. The most interesting is



*Crypt of St.-Laurent (VIIth Century).*

undoubtedly the crypt of Saint-Laurent, which was once a church above the ground but has gradually been covered by landslides from the mountain and on which the modern church of Saint-Laurent has been built. The simple and severe style of the columns places it towards the end of the sixth century, and it is without doubt the most interesting relic of Merovingian art in France.

The cathedral of Notre-Dame has been frequently restored, but the Romanesque tower is fairly pure in style and has therefore been classed as one of our historic monuments. You must see the magnificent Ciborium, a superb specimen of ornate Gothic, carved and traced like a jewel in stone by unknown craftsmen between the years 1455 and 1460.

The church of Saint-André and the Hôtel-de-Ville are jumbled together in a confused group. In spite of mutilations and additions this church, dedicated to Saint-André, is the most perfect and harmonious religious edifice in the town. Begun early in the twelfth century by the efforts of the Dauphin Guigues André, who dedicated for its completion an income of 30,000 sols, being a first charge on the output of the mine at Brandes, it was raised quite close to the ruins of the church of Saint-Jean, and its side door was enriched with the carving which had previously decorated the front entrance of the

*The Church  
of St.-André.  
(XIIIth Century)*



*Mausoleum of Bayard  
in the Church of St.-André.*



collegiate church. Its interior is quiet and imposing, and its most interesting feature is the beautiful gothic spire which raises its slender shaft 72 metres above the court yard.

The Hôtel-de-Ville, joined to the church of Saint-André by the portion which formerly must have been the principal entrance to the nave, was the Hôtel of the Constable of Lesdiguières', then it became the Hôtel de Villeroy. It was bought by the town in the eighteenth century from the descendants of this family. Its main façade looks upon a wide open space called the Jardin de Ville, which was at first a beautiful garden in the French style, with artificial terraces after the manner of Le Nôtre. Considerable alterations have been made which, although they have followed the main lines of the original plan, have transformed the quincunx into a kind of English garden with rockeries and ponds, and the lower portions have been laid out in flower beds.

Opposite the church of Saint-André there is a beautiful relic of gothic art, the old Palais des Dauphins, which became the Palais de la Cour des



*Cloisters in the Convent of Minimes.*





*Ciborium in the Cathedral of Notre-Dame (XVth Century).*



*Palais de Justice — Chambre des Comptes  
(Panelling by Paul Jude 1524).*

Comptes, then the Palais du Parlement de Dauphiné and is now the Court of Appeal. It has had to be restored; an important wing has been added in the style of the original building, which, in its turn, has been restored, and it would now be very difficult to say with certainty how much of the old Palais remains. The whole result has lost those perfect proportions which were the distinctive characteristic of the architecture of our forbears.

In spite of the peculiarities of the façade, and the overloading of the decoration above the principal entrance, the building which owes its real renown to its history appears in the eyes of most visitors worthy of its fame. It is essential to see the rooms in the interior, with their exquisite old panelling which has been so carefully preserved.

These are the only remains which the art of by-gone ages has bequeathed to Grenoble, for it is hardly worth mentioning such places as the Tour de l'Ile, which was for a time the Hôtel-de-Ville, became the Tour





*Palais de Justice (once the Dauphin's Palace).  
In the foreground The Statue of Bayard, by Raggi.*

de la Citadelle, and is now disfigured by a modern-roof — nor the Tour de Clérieux, crowded among the houses in the place Notre-Dame, which occasionally serves the purpose of a belvedere — nor a Renaissance house in the rue Chenoise, where Vaucanson was born, which has been spoiled by modern utilitarianism — nor the remains of the Hôtel de Chaulnes in the Grande rue — nor those of the Hôtel de Crouy-Chanel in the rue Brocherie — nor a house in the style of François I<sup>er</sup> in the courtyard of the latter, — nor the Hôtel de Madame la Connétable, scarcely recognisable in a boarding house in the rue de France.

Among many improvements resulting from the growth and prosperity of the  
*Palais de Justice — Detail of the Entrance.*







*The Hôtel-de-Ville and the Clock-tower of St.-André.*

town, several fine modern buildings have arisen : the Musée-Bibliothèque, the Préfecture, the Palais de l'Université and of the Chambre de Commerce, the Théâtre, the École des Arts Industriels, the church of Saint-Bruno, etc., but even a brief description of them would unduly prolong this slight sketch of the beauties of Grenoble.

The charm of the city is due above all, as we have already said, to its marvellous situation and the walk along the freestone quays which enclose the exquisite curves of the Isère owes its picturesqueness to the great framework of the mountains. This superb promenade round the quays has recently been completed by the creation of the Jardin des Dauphins, the result of the wise efforts of the Syndicat d'Initiative.

In the early days of our history the last buttress of the mountain group of Chartreuse, the Rachais, then called Mont Esson, bathed its steep slopes in the Isère, and the Chemin de France, later called the Lyons road, had to go up by the steep gradient of the old Roman road, now known as the Montée de Chalemont. Later on, after the spur of the





*Garden of the Town — French flower-garden.*

mountain had been cut away by the quarries of la Perrière, it was possible to bring the road back to the edge of the river and there to erect the Porte de France; the lower slopes of the rocks which were left were turned into gardens by Jean-Baptiste Dolle. At the beginning of last century the necessity for defence caused the gardens of Dolle and the property of Rabot, which gave its name to the first fort of Grenoble, to be included in a big fortress. It is on this first slope of the mountain that a real Alpine garden has recently been created, where the terraces are so skilfully graduated that they rise to a point overlooking the whole town. Today the Jardin des Dauphins is one of the glories of Grenoble.

The open spaces and squares of the town are beautified by many superb fountains and by artistic statuary. The most remarkable is, without doubt, the magnificent Monument du Centenaire conceived and carried out by the Grenoble sculptor Henry Ding. A large basin in which bronze tritons throw out plentiful streams of water, surrounds





*The Public Gardens — One of the Terraces in the Gardens*



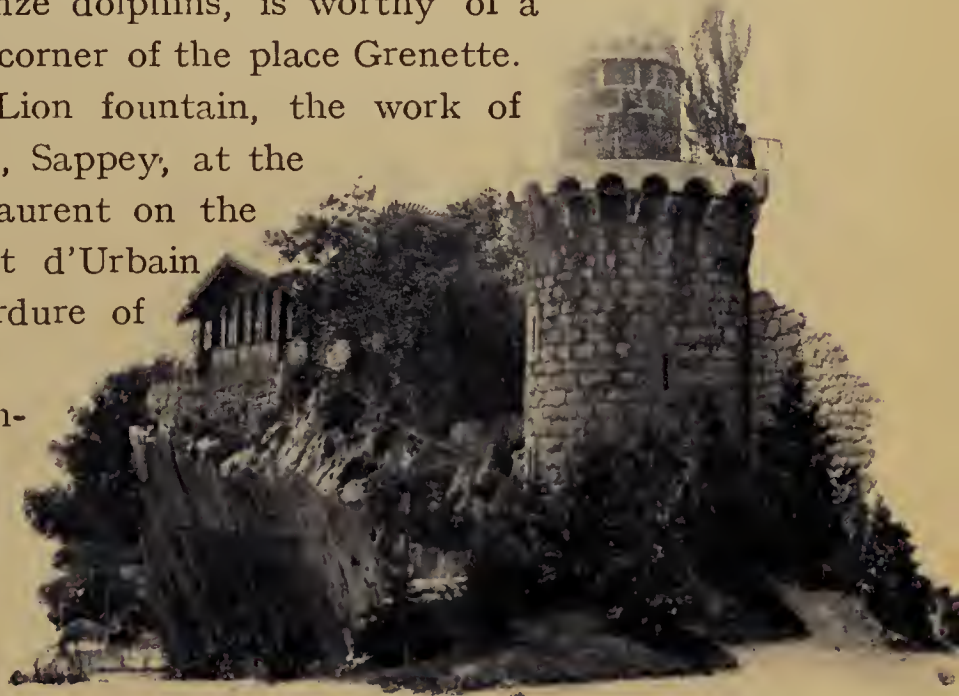


*View from  
the Jardin des Dauphins.*

a big column which supports three proud figures, symbolizing the Three Orders.

The delicate fountain of Lavalette, with its children playing on the backs of bronze dolphins, is worthy of a better site than the narrow corner of the place Grenette. Finally you must see the Lion fountain, the work of another sculptor of Dauphiné, Sappey, at the entrance to the rue Saint-Laurent on the right bank, and the Torrent d'Urbain Basset, hidden amid the verdure of the Jardin de Ville.

The statue of the Constable Lesdiguières, arrayed as Hercules, mounted on a very beautiful pedestal, which is the work of Jacob Richier, is placed among the flowering beds of the



*In the Jardin des Dauphins.*



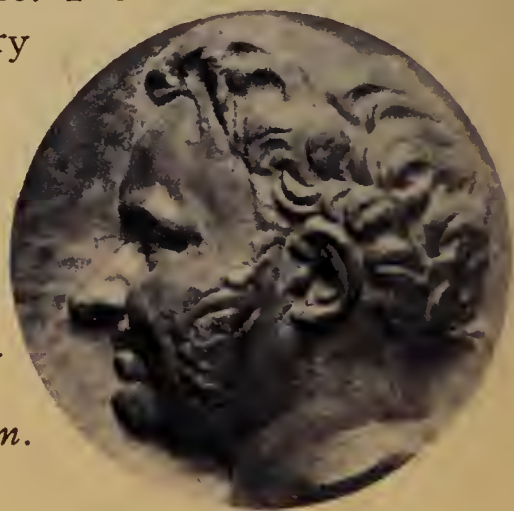


*The Library.*

tistic collections for the benefit of the public. A goodsized library, whose foundation dates back to the eighteenth century, is housed in a building noteworthy for its beautiful architecture. The picture-gallery, which adjoins it, contains some very valuable canvasses which should certainly be seen; it also contains a room of engravings and one of furniture, an Indo-Chinese and an Egyptian collection. The Natural History Museum, which is near the Jardin des Plantes — a huge park, ornamented with very ancient trees — is famous for

Jardin de Ville. The dying chevalier, Bayard, by Raggi ; Xavier Jouvin by Henry Ding ; Vaucanson and Berlioz by Urbain Basset ; the Gallic Sentinel by Irvoy ; the monument to Douart de la Grée by Recoura ; the bust of General Février ; the médaillon to General de Beylié — all these help to immortalize the memory of the country's heroes.

Furthermore, the people of Grenoble have made a great many scientific and ar-



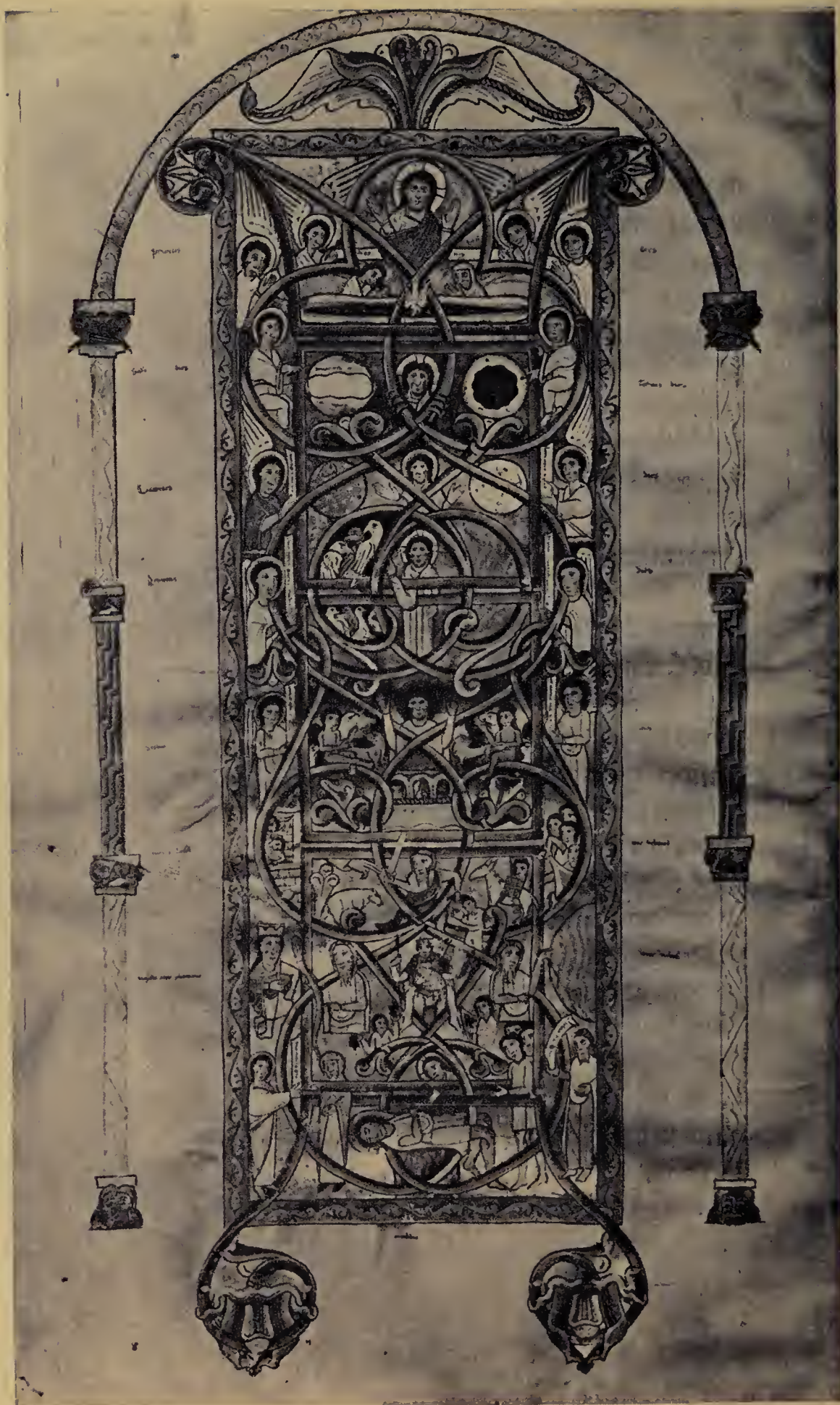
*Stendhal, after Rodin.*





*Stendhal's Pergola after a water-colour by Vignal (20, Grande-Rue).*





*Manuscript from the Grande Chartreuse (XIIth Century).  
Biblical Scene (Bibliothèque de Grenoble No. 2).*





*Museum — The Rubens Room.*

a great Herbarium and a very important collection of minerals. The Dauphiné Museum, a sanctuary for all our precious local relics, has recently been established in a deserted chapel, which was once dedicated to Sainte-Marie. For the time being it is providing a shelter for the Roman inscriptions, the incontrovertible proofs of the city's origin.

As will have appeared from this sketch, Grenoble has suffered countless changes. The little provincial town of earlier times has become a great modern city, crossed by wide shady roads, bordered in summer by flowering trees, palms and oranges.

We have already mentioned among the institutions of Grenoble that which is known as the *Syndicat d'Initiative*, whose principal function is to discover the most essential improvements in the different public services — roads, transport, hotels and so forth — and to study the best ways of attracting and helping visitors. The advantages of its activities are considerable.



*Museum — Paolo Veronese — Christ healing a woman.*

Proud of its University, Grenoble has been enabled to increase its influence, thanks to the generosity and enterprise of private individuals. M. Brenier, a splendid benefactor to his native town, has made possible, by the munificence of his gifts, the creation of the Electro-Technical Institute, which is already the most famous nursery of electrical engineers in the whole of Europe. To it has been added a school of paper-making which is equally flourishing.

The Comité de patronage des étudiants étrangers, founded (in 1896) and presided over by the late lamented Marcel Reymond, who died in 1914, formed a very valuable adjunct to the Grenoble University. Thanks to its efforts the holiday courses have been established, at which professors expound phonetics at the same time as French legislation and the principal movements in the political and administrative life of our day. Students come from every country in Europe, in fact from the whole world, to study under these masters.

Literary, scientific and artistic societies are not lacking in this university town. Grenoble is proud of its Académie Delphinale, whose foundation dates back to the eighteenth century, and which boasts that its letters patent were received from Louis XVI.





*Museum — Rubens — St.-Gregory surrounded by Saints.*





*Palais de l'Université.*

Finally, various athletic and alpine clubs provide physical culture health and vigour for youth, at the same time they teach the value of exercise and a real knowledge and love of the natural beauties of the country. All these institutions, originating in private enterprise, help to nourish the intense intellectual life of Dauphiné and contribute greatly to those opportunities which make Grenoble so attractive and popular a centre.



*Child and Dolphin on the Château d'Eau.*





*The valley of Graisivaudan in the morning.*

## CHAPTER II.

### Le Graisivaudan

---

*From Voreppe to Chapareillan — La Tronche,  
Le Touvet, Tencin.*

The magnificent plain which extends around Grenoble is called the Graisivaudan. It is an unusually fertile district and is subjected to the most intensive culture by its inhabitants, who never let an inch of it lie fallow, and nature responds with overflowing bounty to the labour expended on this land.

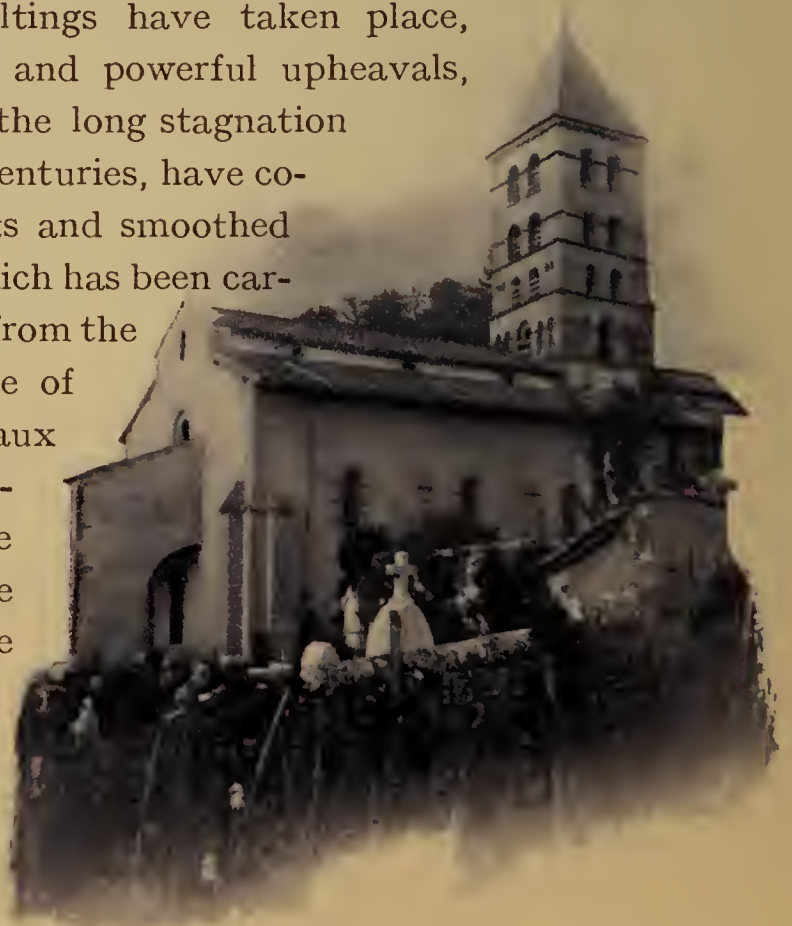
In the eyes of a geologist seated at any good view point, Mont Jala or the Tour sans Venin, for example, where he could take in the whole district at a glance, that part of the Isère valley which touches the feet



*The valley of Graisivaudan in the morning.*

of the high mountains on all sides, would very forcibly suggest the appearance of an ancient lake. Local investigation has brought to light evidence to show that successive siltings have taken place, that there has been a glacial period and powerful upheavals, but all the evidence is governed by the long stagnation of the waters which, during countless centuries, have covered the beds of glaciers and torrents and smoothed them over with the precious mould, which has been carried down continuously by the waters from the neighbouring valleys. The black slate of the Maurienne, the clay from Sept-Laux and Oisans, the limestone from Dévoluy and Vercors are all mingled here in an extraordinarily fertile mud, whose richness centuries of cultivation have failed to exhaust. The chief forms of agriculture carried on in this valley are the cultivation of the vine,

*The old Church at Voreppe.*







*The Isère below Grenoble at the foot of Néron.*

corn-growing and the growing of walnuts. Over an area of more than fifty miles in length, varying from two and a half to three miles in breadth, the dead flatness of the basin is only broken by the cone-shaped openings which the rivers from the adjoining valleys form in entering it. The natural consequence has been the growth of a large number of agricultural centres.

Lower down the stream, where it comes into contact with the swollen waters from Terres-Froides, and loses itself in the marshes of Moirans and of Tullins, we find the township of Voreppe.

An effort has been made, more ingenious than scientific, to trace the etymological derivation of *Castrum Vorappium* from *Vorago Alpium*, the entrance to the Alps. The situation lends itself to this hypothesis admirably, and from the slopes of the Buisse or of Saint-Jean-de-Moirans, even from the famous terrace of Vouize, you can see the marvellous gateway — formed by the cliffs of Roize and the Aiguille de Chalais on one side and the Bec de l'Échaillon and the Dent de Montaud on the other — framing, at the far end of the receding plain, the mountains of Lavaldens, of Saint-Jean-de-Vaux and of Dévoluy. It is indeed the



*Grenoble and the Chartreuse Group.*

entrance to the Alps, a giant gateway where the valley of Graisivaudan begins, quite narrow at this point but spreading itself out right up to the gates of Grenoble.

Built up on the siltings of the river called the Roize, Voreppe contains in its upper half several old houses and an ancient church with a clock-tower which is a remarkable example of Romanesque architecture. The new church is ordinary and only commands attention because of the frescoes with which the brush of the native artist Debelle has decorated it. The hills round Voreppe are formed of thick masses of sandstone which have been the object of subterranean exploration and the great spaces which have been excavated, divided by huge pillars left to support the overhanging weight, make it look now like a strange hypogeum.

At the top of the buttress of sandstone a steep and stony track leads to the still impressive ruins of an old feudal castle, a place in this valley which has been too much neglected. Still higher the Aiguille de Chalais rises, disclosing a marvellous view.





*The Isère above Grenoble and the Belledonne range.*

Voreppe is an example of the changing fortunes which overtake a town dependent on its road. Formerly, during the season, it witnessed an incessant stream of carriages making for the Grande Chartreuse

by the Col de la Placette, now it is left almost deserted as a result of the opening of the railway between Voiron and Saint-Béron. The electric tramway which joins it to Grenoble brought it a scrap of comfort by carrying there a fair number of pedestrians, and now the extraordinary development of the use of motors-cars has restored it to its old liveliness.

Saint-Robert, formerly centring round the monastery of Saint-Robert-de Cornillon, is today



*The Rock of Cornillon at Fontanil.*



*The Château de Bouquéron and Grenoble.*

the site of a lunatic asylum and would not have any interest were it not for the town of Saint-Égrève, which is the place of departure for excursions to Proveyzieux, to Quaix and to Pomaray.

Buisserate, a little village in the commune of Saint-Martin-le-Vinoux is on the road which goes over to the Ermitage de Néron, to Narbonne, and even to the dark mountain. It is this Néron, or more correctly Neiron, which a wretched punster has travestied into "Casque de Néron". It is a fascinating but dangerous peak, which has levied heavier toll on its climbers than all the other peaks in Dauphiné put together. The ascent necessitates rock-climbing before the summit ridge can be reached. The view which it reveals is most impressive; from the highest point the eye reaches not only to Grenoble but equally far on the Voreppe side, while at your feet lies the confluence of the Drac and the Isère.

On the other side of the plain a parallel line of tramways serves the farming villages of Sassenage, Noyarey, and Veurey, but by old feudal tradition the name of Graisivaudan is very often restricted to that part of the Isère valley which lies above Grenoble.





*La Dent de Crolles.*

There also on both banks of the river, which are just as fertile, two lines of tramways wind through the growing settlements, but while the colonies on the right bank are primarily agricultural, those on the left side are dependent to a greater extent on manufacturing.

At the entrance of the town, the faubourg de la Tronche boasts of a church containing the Madonna of the Deliverance, the masterpiece of the famous painter Hébert, who bequeathed it to the town in acknowledgement of his long stay there. Coldly perched in a niche of Mont Rachais, this colony of villas and country-houses is the little Provence of Grenoble. From there you get a wonderful glimpse of the first range of the Alps of Dauphiné, and of the neighbouring commune of Corenc including three mediaeval castles : the old château des Dauphins, which became the convent of Montfleuri, celebrated for being the scene of Madame de Tencin's novitiate, and later converted into a school — the château de Bouquéron, perched like the nest of an eagle on a spur of the mountain over-looking the plain — and the château d'Arvilliers, which goes by the popular name of Tour des Chiens.





*Panorama from Domène. — The Chartreux.*

The tramway between Grenoble and Chapareillan runs all along the right side of the valley of Graisivaudan, stopping at innumerable villages which all exist on vine-growing. Their fortunate position has made them into prosperous holiday resorts. From the picturesque point of view it is worth mentioning the old Tour d'Ars above Saint-Ismier, built according to Pilot in the twelfth century — the great Château de Marcieu which dominates Touvet — and the neat Castel du Muret quite close to Barraux.

All these smiling hillsides are hedged in by the steep slopes of Saint-Eynard and further on by the spurs which support the plateau of the Petites-Roches, the advance guard of the great wall of the Dent de Crolles and of the Aup du Seuil. The everchanging view afforded by the Belledonne chain and the Allevard group is the great charm of this district.





Range : St.-Eynard and la Dent de Crolles.

From the point where the bend towards Touvet becomes marked, the grandeur of Mont-Blanc adds an element of fairy-land to the marvellous picture. Near Chapareillan you can visit the chasms of Myans, the remains of the appalling catastrophe which, in 1248, overwhelmed the little town of Saint-André under the collapse of the side of the Granier, and engulfed more than five thousand people.

The settlements on the left side of Graisivaudan are of a totally different character. Some of them have established themselves on the banks of tributaries which, coming down from the snow-clad mountains, used to give a regular supply of water. The inhabitants turned their attention to the utilisation of the streams and established factories which soon gave rise to rapidly growing prosperity.

The primitive agricultural population, similar to that on the other



*Plateau des Petites Roches — View of Belledonne.*

side, has become in part industrial and Domène, Lancey, Brignoud, Froges, Pontcharra now include a very important working class population. The paper mills at Lancey were founded by Aristide Bergès.

The country on this side and the mountains overlooking it are full of picturesque places and interesting old buildings. Above Domène the ruins of the Château de Revel, the old house of a branch of the Alleman family, still makes a bold show on its mountainous height.

At Tencin a dilapidated and threatening old tower reminds you of the ancient manor of the Guérin family, from which the famous Madame de Tencin and her brother the Cardinal came. The château which used to belong to the Aynard family has been replaced by a luxurious house in the style of Louis XV and is today the Château de Monteynard. The shady park surrounding it encloses a very interesting spot, known as the Bout du Monde.

In the upper village of the Adrets you can still see sections of the walls and the remains of a fire-place which are traces of the birth-place of the too famous Baron.



Near Goncelin, in the village of Morétel, the château de Mailles is still standing; its interest is derived from the memory of its master, Jacques de Mailles, who was the " Loyal Serviteur ".

This old ruin has offered less resistance to the onslaught of the weather than the manor-house of the " Bon Chevalier ". In point of fact Château-Bayard, which is quite near to Pontcharra, dates from at least three different periods. An entirely new house has sprung up by the old walls and the two towers which date back two or three centuries, and there is only one crumbling tower and an old mullioned window which can have been part of the home of the " Chevalier sans peur et sans reproche ".

As it is only a short distance from Allevard-les-Bains, Château-Bayard is one of the easiest excursions that can be made from that centre and this explains the popularity which it enjoys among the visitors who stay there to take the waters.

The administrative limit (formerly the frontier of the state) of the department of Isère comes to an end at *Gratianopolitanus pagus*, but



*The Three Peaks of Belledonne seen from the right bank of the Isère.*

the valley scorns such artificial boundaries and continues its way up to Montmélian and Saint-Pierre-d'Albigny, and on to Albertville, where it grows out of the junction of three mountain valleys.

For those who wish to know and study Dauphiné, this wide plain in its picturesque setting is only the ante-chamber, which opens into the mountain ranges around it.



*The natural Bridge on Néron.*





*The Monastery of the Grande Chartreuse.*

### CHAPTER III.

## Chartreuse

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*Saint-Laurent du Pont — Le Désert — The Monastery of the Grande-Chartreuse — The Panorama of the Peaks.*

The glories of the Monastery of the Grande-Chartreuse were the first among all the beauties surrounding Grenoble to become famous.

The great reputation of the Order, which was founded in 1082, under the direction of Saint-Bruno, in the bosom of these mountains from which it took its name, has attracted, year by year, many distinguished visitors. Despite the wellknown indifference of our fore-fathers to the beauties of nature, they could not keep their eyes closed to the country through





*Tunnel in the road to the Grande Chartreuse.*

which they travelled, and as early as the seventeenth century we find praises of the beauty of these parts. This district, which was the earliest to be appreciated and has been immortalised by poets and artists, is still the most perfect example of the picturesque in nature, and the perfect harmony of the rocks, the waters and the trees forms a picture which no one can fail to appreciate.

Not long ago heavy and cumbersome *diligences*, which were replaced by lighter and better built Alpine carriages, used to carry the visitors from Grenoble to Chartreuse. The opening of the railway between Voiron and Saint-Béron

*The Forge at Fourvoirie.*







*The Guiers — Entrance to the Désert.*



was a great improvement, and in spite of the detour at Voiron, it reduced the time and the trouble of the journey considerably. But the development of motor traffic has put this route, which was not a bad one, entirely in the background, and nowadays motor-cars rush from all parts towards the enchanted land.

From Grenoble, from Voiron, from Chambéry and from Aix-les-Bains visitors make for Saint-Laurent-du-Pont — which is the key to the “ Désert ”. Watered by the Guiers - Mort, Saint-Laurent-du-Pont, formerly called Saint-Laurent-du-Désert, is a big town which was rebuilt from its foundations after the fire of 1854 and has grown wealthy



*Under the Bridge of Valombrey.*

from the incessant stream of visitors. You must see its beautiful modern church built in the Romanesque-Byzantine style, founded by the liberality of the Chartreuse Fathers, who also endowed a huge hospital where the sick of the district were cared for at their expense.

Here you are actually at the entrance of the gorge of Guiers-Mort and the little chapel on the right bank, and

just opposite, the hospital on the left side, frame the opening. For more than a mile this defile is only a track between the sloping sides of the mountain, which are grassy, wooded and precipitous in turn. Then come some erections, which are the work of man but, buried among the trees,



merge harmoniously into the landscape; it is Fourvoirie, *Forata Via*, the road which the Chartreuse Fathers have drilled through the foot of the rocks which were for so long insurmountable except for the narrow passage through the Guiers cut by nature herself. From here the Désert de la Chartreuse begins and for more than five miles it holds you breathless with admiration.

The Chartreuse Fathers, who were the exclusive owners of the Désert, found in early days in the inaccessibility of their retreat a peace which was, however, broken by the armed bands of the baron des Adrets. The main road into this shady valley, dedicated to religion, was the mule



*Pont du Grand Logis.*

track which came from Saint-Pierre-de-Chartreuse, along the banks of the Guiers, and crossed a bridge just outside the hostelry for travelers, called the Grand - Logis. The bridge was guarded by a gate, the Porte de la Paroisse. Another mule track came up from Ruchère by the neck of the Vacherie, but you had to begin by passing through the Pas-du-Frou. None of the other roads were accessible

except to pedestrians and they were chiefly of use to shepherds and hunters for you had to know the country intimately not to get lost. Nature defended the monks admirably from the wickedness of the outside world.

As time went on security developed. It became possible to give up



*The Chartreuse Valley, seen from Valombrey.*

this isolation without danger and the monks came to see that it was a pity to let the abundant wealth of their forests go to waste. Quite at the beginning of the eighteenth century the Fathers set to work to open a new road which followed the gorge of the Guiers and made it possible to put up a little blast-furnace at Fourvoirie, where they sent the charcoal from the woods. It soon became the usual route for their visitors and they guarded it also with a gate, called the Porte de Fourvoirie.

This road, whose main features we know from the charming drawings by Bourgeois and Champin, was supported, above the gateway, by rocky bastions which have only



*Courrerie.*



been enlarged in the construction of the new road. It wound through the forest over a track very like that followed today and, after branching off to Curière and to Tenaïson, it passed out of the Guiers over the Pont-Pérant, which was placed over the torrent at a point where the rocks narrowed its course. This bridge still exists and is above the Pont Saint-Bruno.

Further on, on the right bank, the road, of which only the causeway can still be traced, ascended to the passage de l'Oeillette where it was barred by a kind of fortress which had fallen into ruins by the time of



*The banks of the Guiers in summer.*

Champin. It was supported on buttresses where now it traverses several tunnels. Finally it came down into the valley of Saint-Bruno before it reached the monastery. This last part of the road is only accessible at a few points.

After the confiscation during the revolutionary period and the first exile of the monks, the forests of the Désert were

still preserved from all exploitation, so that when the Fathers returned in 1816 the government, without returning their property to them, allowed them to cut such wood as they required from their old forests because they were useless for anything else.

Towards 1850 the Forestry Department woke up to the value of this wonderful district and took the modern road in hand. This road was opened in 1856. It was planned most intelligently and did not spoil in any way the splendid country through which it goes. It only rendered it more





*The Monastery of the Grande Chartreuse.*

accessible and lovers of nature have nothing to complain of, except that the Porte de Fourvoirie and the ruins of the fortress of l'Oeillette were destroyed in the process.



Custom has given the name of „Route du Désert ” to the marvellous course of the road, across the old enclosure of Chartreuse, from Fourvoirie to the monastery and Saint - Pierre-de - Chartreuse. After passing over its stone bastions, at a place where the jaws of the rocks literally leave no room for the torrent as well as the road, which has forced its way through them — it is called Étroit de l'Entrée du Désert — the road goes for nearly three miles through a beautiful forest containing every variety of tree. Close to, are the Vicat cement

*The Chapel of St.-Bruno.*





*Valley of St.-Pierre de Chartreuse and Chamechaude in winter.*

works, the only factory in the district. Next you come to a bend in the gorge, where the road crosses to the right bank, over the bold Pont Saint-Bruno. Soon the slender white pyramid of l'Oeillette pierces through the black masses of the pine trees. You leave the narrow way which is guarded by that great sentinel and you pass through the rocky buttresses, which overhung the old road, by four successive tunnels. Three of these tunnels are in themselves an addition to the picturesqueness of the scene.

You leave the vale of Guiers-Mort almost without noticing it and enter the branch



*The old Mill of St.-Pierre.*



*The Ridges of Lances de Malissard.*

valley of Saint-Bruno, and on the site of the Croix-Verte, which is nearly five miles from Saint-Laurent-du-Pont, you see a road which goes straight to Saint-Pierre-de-Chartreuse, turning off on the right over a stone bridge with four arches.



The main road winds through a forest of grand beechtrees and arrives quite suddenly before the walls of the Grande Chartreuse.

The Chartreuse Fathers were expelled from the country which benefited so greatly by their presence, on the 29th of April 1903, in accordance with the laws passed against religious fraternities. The monastery was handed over to keepers

*Road to Col de la Charmette.*





*In the Valley of the Charmette.*

who allow parties of visitors to go over it. The buildings, which are not used, are kept up by the State at considerable expense, but they will, nevertheless, soon be in ruins. However much of a sceptic one may be, one feels a clutch at one's heart as one goes through the great cloisters now deserted into the empty church and the neglected chapels, into the Chapter-House stripped of the portraits of the Generals of the Order, and into the cells where no more prayers will be said.

It is worth while glancing at those other relics of bye-gone days, the chapel of Notre-Dame de Casalibus and the chapel of Saint - Bruno , which are equally deserted. If you do not



*Hay-making.*





*Col du Cucheron.*

attempt the magnificent ascent of Grand-Som (2033 metres), you go back to the valley of the Guiers, via Courrierie, and leave it again through the impressive gorge of the Grand-Logis.

As soon as you have passed the Pont des Moines and the Porte de la Paroisse, the mountains recede and you come out into the smiling valley of Saint-Pierre-de-Chartreuse.



You will find there hotels, villas and cottages charmingly arranged in decorative terraces on the Southern slope of Grand-Som. The attractions of Saint-Pierre-de-Chartreuse, which have been excellently displayed by its Syndicat d'Initiative, include an alpine garden which must serve modern tourists in the place of the ancient and mysterious attraction of the *The Cliffs of Grand Som*.





*The Vale of Entremont.*





*Sources du Gouvernement.*

tremont. There you will find pure air, healthy conditions and pleasurable surroundings.

If it is less impressive, the return journey is not less beautiful.

You go through a fertile valley open to the South and filled to overflowing with light and sunshine. Then you go up over the sides of Charmanson through

*Col du Coq.*

the Grande Chartreuse.

There are enchanting walks in all directions for newcomers. You can easily make expeditions to the four chief mountains of the group : Grand-Som (2033 metres), Charmanson (1871 metres) the Dent de Crolles (2066 metres) and Chamechaude (2081 metres) : you can see the waterfall of the Guiers-Mort and the strange grotto at its source; you can lie and dream on Vallombreuse and Malamille; you can cross the Col du Cucheron, you can admire the beauty of the valley of Guiers-Vif, and you can even get as far as the other centre in the group, Saint-Pierre-d'En-





the happy villages of Gerbetière, Guillets, Cottaves, then under the dense vault of a forest, from which you get a backward glimpse of the superb perspective of Grand-Som. So you reach the Col de Porte (1352 metres) where a charming chalet-hotel has recently been established. Here the character of the scenery changes abruptly. Above the fertile valley of Sappey and the wooded ridge of Saint-Eynard, the eye can rest on the majestic outlines of the first ranges of the Alps of Dauphiné. But you have to come down and sink into the valley of Sappey, a depression lying be-



*View from Col du Frey towards Grande Sure.*



tween the southern base of Chamechaude and the back of Saint-Eynard, a summer resort which is also popular in the winter as a sports-centre, especially for skiers. Still descending rapidly you skirt the burbling current of the Vence. The road descends smoothly, avoiding the dip on the left, goes round over a grassy ridge which rises *Haberts de Bovinant.*



*Col de la Petite Vache.*

between Saint-Eynard and the brow of Rachais, and then an exclamation of admiration is forced from your lips. You feel as though you were on a balcony hanging above the valley of Graisivaudan and the town of Grenoble and opposite you are the Belledonne range and the peaks of Vercors. It is fairyland.

You must make a pause to take in the whole scene. Soon however the car starts again and the horizon widens until the Allevard mountains are ranged beside the heights of Belledonne and Mont-Blanc itself glitters at the end of the valley. No one can remain unmoved before this panorama, which is by universal consent one of the most marvellous mountain scenes in the world.



*View from the Grotto of the Guiers  
towards Grand Som.*



The village of Corenc, the château de Bouquéron and the suburb of la Tronche pass before your dazzled eyes like shadows, and when you get back to Grenoble you can still by a last glance follow the giddy track which comes down from Saint-Eynard.

Such is the famous excursion which no visitor to Grenoble can afford to miss. After this, even if your time is restricted, you can hardly resist the desire to get to know this lovely country more thoroughly, then, by lingering in the Chartreuse district you will find that every corner and cranny conceals its special charm and as it reveals itself to you, you will feel your love for nature grow apace.



*The Chalet on the Col de Porte.*





*Pont-en-Royans.*





*The Plateau of St.-Nizier and the Trois Pucelles.*

## CHAPTER IV.

### Vercors

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*Sassenage and Villard-de-Lans — The Tramway to Villard — The Gorges of the Bourne — Les Grands-Goulets — Le Vercors souterrain — The principal mountains.*

On the other side of the Isère valley the outline of Vercors continues that of the Chartreuse group. Vercors is formed, like the Chartreuse mountains, from huge layers of limestone, it is covered with great forests, intersected by deep gorges which divide it up into uneven plateaux, It conceals beautiful country of a very varied nature.

There are many ways of reaching it and the visitor has only to choose between motor-cars and electric trams.

The road for motor-cars approaches the mountains via Sassenage which is nearly four miles from Grenoble. Sassenage is built in the plain, at the entrance to the gorge, through which first a glacier and then a

torrent broke a way between the rocky walls. It rises tier above tier up to the little hamlet of Côtes, which is on the moraine of the old glacier and this little town has always commanded the admiration of beholders. Our fore-fathers counted here two of the seven wonders of Dauphiné, the " Cuves de Sassenage " and the " Préciosier ".

The " Cuves " are still there, though they are stripped of their legends, and their surroundings, the gorge and waterfalls of the Furon, made famous by painters, attract great numbers of excursionists.

The road ascends the slopes of Côtes by two big zigzags, and affords a superb view over the plain, the nearest spurs of the Chartreuse and the snow-covered Alps in the distance. Through the Portes you enter the first depression called the plateau of Engins. In spite of the fact that the road has reached a height of 800 metres when it gets to the village of Engins, it meets the Furon there, which attains this level by a number of swift and gloomy waterfalls buried in the depths of an inaccessible gorge. Here the road enters the most charming part of the district.



*Château de Sassenage.*



For nearly two miles the Furon pursues a peaceful course, winding through a defile, hollowed out by the force of its waters in the course of time. To right and left rise steep walls of rock of varying height, which enclose the ravine and in some places are only wide enough to contain the bed of the stream, and in others expand to leave room for meadowland. In many places the glaciers have cut deep traces of their mighty activity; in others pine trees cling to the steep slopes or crown the whiteness of the rocks with a black plume. The gorges of Engins are one of the chief beauties of this excursion.

At the end of the ravine you go up a steep but short slope into the full light of day on the wide plateau of Lans.

The electric tramway reaches this spot by another and more artificial route.

Leaving Sassenage in a northerly direction it attacks the western side of Vercors over the slopes of Seyssinet and Seyssins. Once it has passed through these two suburban settlements, which are made up of villas and little châteaux, it winds and twists up a wooded slope. It passes near to the old ruin called the Tour sans Venin and at each turn affords a wider and more wonderful view. If you look towards Grenoble you can amuse yourself by identifying the well-known heights which



*Sassenage : a Waterfall of the Furon.*



*Seyssinet and the Tramway from Villard de Lans.*

surround the city. All the peaks of the Chartreuse rise one above another, the long outline of the Belledonne ranges and of Sept-Laux fill a third of the horizon, Mont-Blanc reigns supreme over all and the heights of Oisans appear in their turn, completing a picture of unsurpassable variety and harmony. At some points the traveller sees hanging above his head the threatening precipices of the Trois Pucelles, and then, after a quiet part through a forest, you arrive at the top of the incline at the station of Saint-Nizier. There the view changes and you turn towards the inner basin of the Furon. The swift descent of the tramway cuts the western flanks of the Moucherotte, it skirts the opening of the Bruyant and finally reaches the village of Lans at the beginning of the plain.

Here the plain is practically level, with an average altitude of 1000 metres; it extends over an area of seven and a half miles and is from one to one and three-quarters of a mile wide. It is bounded on the west by dense woods and on the east by precipitous and rocky heights. Among these heights you can distinguish, with increasing certainty as you go south, the receding top of the Moucherotte, the crest of the Pic Saint-Michel, the wide opening of the Col de l'Arc, the rocks of





*The Trois Pucelles and the Chartreuse Range.*

Cornafion, and over all, in the background, the magnificent spurs of the Moucherolle. You pass over the threshold of the basin of the Bourne almost without noticing it, and soon you see near by the transparent streams which unite to form the river winding its sinuous course through the marshy fields.

At the southern end of the plain a hill rises on which is built the town of Villard-de-Lans (1040 metres), which owes its perfect healthfulness to its high and windy position. No artificial beauty, neither ruin nor château can hold the attention of the visitor from the superb country which is spread out in all directions before your eyes. The shady source of the Petit Vaucluse, the cliffs in the valley of Fauge, the meadows of Col Vert, the picturesque village of Pierres, the ravine, the glacier and the fields of Corençon, the forest of Loubière, the road from Valchevrière, the dairies of Herbouilly — all these make it easy to understand the popularity which this summer resort enjoys.

The tourist who is short of time must continue his rapid trip by following the downward course of the Bourne, which at this point hurls

its waters from rapid to rapid. The exit from the plateau is made through a miniature ravine, the Porte de l'Aiguille, which is unique. Then for nearly two miles you go across green and wooded slopes to the juncture of the Méaudret and the Bourne. Here you come to the enchanted land. The road, wrested from nature by human intelligence and enterprise, enters one of those grottos which are so frequent in Vercors, of which the gorges of Engins were only a foretaste. In a narrow passage, a winding tunnel sawn out of the rocks, hemmed in by walls which in places rise to more than 200 metres, the waters of the Bourne, swollen all the time by numerous springs dash themselves against the rocks, are flung up in spray and keep the air constantly moist, thus encouraging vegetation. Shrubs and pine trees insert their roots into every crevice and mosses cover everything like a carpet. Light filters through a narrow chink in the rocks and on the hottest day of summer the air has a cool moisture which refreshes the traveller, breathless with admiration. This first and grandest part of the gorges



*Tunnel in the Goulets Road.*



of the Bourne goes on for about three miles between the Jarrands and the Pont de Goule Noire.

This beautiful bridge which harmonises perfectly with the gloomy scene, is crossed by four diverging roads. If you follow the course of the Bourne you pass the charming village of Balme-de-Rencurel, and then come to some new gorges which are wider and deeper and thickly wooded. They command the grotto and the electrical station of Bour-nillon. Next you pass the orchards of Choranche and at the end of the next gorge lies the Pont-en-Royans. This is the easy way which is usually taken



*Pont de la Goule Noire.*

by amateur cyclists. But the ordinary road followed by motor-cars avoids that part, and does not cross the bridge of Goule-Noire but remains on the left bank and quickly gets out of the basin of the Bourne by ascending to the Col de Saint-Julien, which it enters from into the heart of Vercors.

It goes through a cultivated plateau sloping to the south and

hemmed in on the east by huge limestone fissures in which, under certain atmospheric conditions, you can discern an enormous statue of the Virgin of Vercors. Next the road passes the villages of Saint-Julien and of Saint-Martin-en-Vercors. At a short distance from



*The Valley of the Bourne in winter.*

the latter you come to the stream of the Vernaison and from there, going westward, you reach the colony of hotels called Baraques. Although a rough road of about four miles lies between them, Baraques is a kind of suburb of Chapelle-en-Vercors, the most important and largest town in the district.

Chapelle-en-Vercors is on the road which leads to the remote plateau of Vassieux and on to Die, through the valley of the Col du Rousset. These are charming excursions and can

be made to include a visit to the famous forest of Lente or an ascent to the strange plateaux of Glandas, but they must remain unseen by the hurried traveller.

The marvellous ravine of the Grands-Goulets begins in Baraquef itself, just past the last hotel. After issuing from a passage hewn out of the solid limestone, the stream dashes down in a steep spiral, which is called the Vallon d'Échevis, and tumbles to the bottom in a series of cascades. The road is hewn out of the left side of the mountain and sometimes forces its way through subterranean passages. When it emerges again, it crosses to the right bank of the river and carves its way through tunnels and over buttresses through the great mountain walls which overlook the valley of Échevis. The road



*The Goulets Road.*





*The Goulets Road in winter.*





*A Gorge of the Bourne.*

and after the tunnel of Roche-Fendue you descend the side of the mountain by two steep zig-zags. At the bottom of the valley of Échevis you are again in an enclosure of rocks, a kind of trap, from which the Vernaison escapes through an unapproachable crevice, and the road has to go through four more tunnels to make its way out. These tunnels are the Petits-Goulets. When you have passed these last obstacles, you have left Vercors behind and you reach Pont-en-Royans via Sainte-Eulalie.

The town of Pont-en-Royans is the western entrance to Vercors, as Sassenage is the eastern gate and Die the southern. At Pont-en-Royans the waters of the Bourne and the Vernaison — the two main streams draining this district — unite, and here also its two principal roads meet.

From Pont-en-Royans you speedily reach St.-

*The Combe Laval Road.*

## GRENOBLE

continues to be a marvelous feat of engineering for nearly two miles and you pass without a pause from the darkness of the passages to the dazzling light of the open way. The roar of the river tumbling down its innumerable cascades re-echos in the rocky vaults and everything combines to intensify the tremendous effect.

The mountains recede







*The first Tunnel in the Combe Laval Road.*





*Mont Aiguille.*

Jean-en-Royans and from there to the forest of Lente by the picturesque route of Combe Laval.

The district of Vercors is by nature totally inaccessible, as is proved by the marvels of engineering involved in the construction of its roads. It possesses, moreover, many strange features. It is surrounded on all sides by steep mountain walls, rising from a region made up a series of large and small valleys. It rests on a substratum crossed and fissured by ravines and grottos, where many springs of water are thrown up by powerful subterranean currents.

The best known of the grottos are those of the Cuves de Sassenage, the Glacière de Corençon, the Goule-Blanche, the Goule-Noire, the Bourdillon, the Font-d'Urle



*Sheep on Vercors.*





*Col Vert and the Gerbier Ridge.*

and the Brudour. The majority of these underground shafts correspond to the visible pits at Lente, Ambel, Presles, Vassieux, Malaterre, etc., and the admirable researches of M. Martel and of those whom he has initiated into cave formation have corroborated the correctness of the conclusions drawn from the external appearance of the ground, concerning the extraordinary subterranean formation. It is almost true to say that the Vercors which we see and visit is only like a mantle thrown over the reality, whose rocky skeleton is hidden out of sight.

From the point of view of the climber this big group affords four first-class objectives; the Moucherotte (1907 metres) which owes its fame in part to its proximity to Grenoble and in part to its marvellous views — the Moucherolle (2289 metres) the usual ascent for summer visitors to Villard-de-Lans, a climb which affords them a view into seven départements — the Grand Veymont (2346 metres) the highest point of the range, to which the easiest road goes via Saint-Michel-les-Portes — and Mont Aiguille (2097 metres) the precipitous peak which for a long time ranked among the Seven wonders of Dauphiné under

the name of Mont Inaccessible. This mountain enjoys the historic distinction of being the first to be climbed for the sake of the climb " avec moult difficultés et subtils engins " by Antoine de Ville, Seigneur de Dompjulien et de Beaupré, by order of Charles VIII, on the 26th of June 1492.

With its many marvels, Vercors attracts all who wish to know the Alps of Dauphiné and all who love nature, and its growing popularity is helped by the fact that it is easily accessible and easy to explore.



*A Track near Villard de Lans.*





*A Village in Oisans : Oz.*

## CHAPTER V.

### Oisans

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*Vizille, the gateway of Oisans — The town of Oisans, the Grave and the Lautaret — Glandon and Grandes Rousses.*

Oisans is the chief mountainous region of Dauphiné. The highest point in the district was, until the annexation of Savoy, the highest peak on French soil, and looking from that superb height, the Barre des Ecrins (4103 metres), it is almost impossible to count the innumerable peaks which rise to more than 3000 metres. They are all piled up one upon another and they spring up like spires from the narrow valleys which separate them like little streets, while their snowy peaks and glaciers glitter like streams and cascades. It is a strange chaos of snow and of rock, a fairy world which dazzles the eyes of those accustomed only to the plains.

The origin of this place is lost in the mist of time and the earliest inhabitants, who were obviously shepherds, have not left any records

of themselves, but our investigations trace the beginning of its history to the conquest and the occupation of the Romans. The lords of the world, in order to link the peninsula to the rich colony of Vienne, built one of their magnificent military roads from Oisans through Brigantio to Cularo, and their halting places are marked on the Table de Peutinger.

It is a tribute to these hardy pioneers that the present road follows, in its main lines, the Roman route. Modern road makers have not climbed so many slopes and although they possess more powerful weapons, they have generally been content to let the road of their predecessors roam on

the heights. Nevertheless, we travel to-day through the same valley and in the same general direction as did the Romans.

After leaving Grenoble and passing the first hills, which are for the most part old glacial alluvions, you arrive at the real foot of the mountain when you reach the small town of Vizille. The ancient *Castrum Vigilium* guarded the entrance of these defiles and its walls were perched on these spurs, which were so admirably suited for purposes of defence. It was built on the ruins, some of which are still visible, of the



*Vizille — The Gateway of the Priory.*





Château du Roi, for strategic reasons always necessitated the erection of a fortress on this site.

To-day the traveller sees at Vizille the imposing Château which the viceroy of Dauphiné, the Constable Lesdiguières, built there for his court and, if you are interested in the artistic remains of the past, you must allow sufficient time to cast a glance at the gates of the Priory in



the cemetery, where an unknown artist has carved the Lord's Supper and a figure of Christ of extraordinary beauty. The Chapelle de la Commanderie, which is on the rising road leading to Laffrey, is a very complete specimen of Romanesque style, and though deserted is still intact.

After you have passed along the walls of Lesdiguières park and gone through the industrial village of Péage, the road comes to a point where the small plain ends and the Gorge de la Romanche begins.

This magnificent gorge, which passes between walls of rock rising to a height

*Porte du Connétable.*





*The Romanche Valley : the Weir of the Livet Factory.*

of 1200 to 1500 metres, is the cradle of many industrial enterprises. The



Romanche, whose lovely stream flows through the gorge, has been the object of considerable engineering enterprise with the result that to-day, from the threshold of the Véna to the lower part of the Séchilienne, the stream feeds a large number of generating stations. The forces of the river have been turned to good use and its power is sometimes conducted through subterranean channels and at others carried off in immense tubes of sheet steel, which look like the black coils of an enormous serpent. Part of the current thus

*The Roman Gate on Mont-de-Lent.*





*Bourg d'Oisans.*

obtained is utilised on the spot, and the rest is transported to a distance.

On the slope of Livet, after the last generating station has been passed, you may then behold without interruption the chain of the rocks and glaciers of Grandes-Rousses silhouetted against the sky.

The gorge through which we have travelled so far widens out and loses itself in a wide plain with an average altitude of 720 mètres, whose features suggest that it is the bed of an ancient lake. This was the lake of Saint-Laurent, famous for its break-up and the inundation of 1219, which very nearly destroyed Grenoble. The existence of this lake compelled the Romans to



*Pont d'Auris.*



*Grave.*

cut their road out of the sides of the rocky mountains at Rochetaillée, where traces of it are still to be seen.

Two-thirds of the way across this plain, which is enclosed by mountainous walls, lies the township of Oisans, in which the life and activity of all these mountains centre. The church, which has been somewhat restored, was formerly called Saint-Laurent du Lac, and is built on the foundations of a primitive basilica. Only a short time ago you could still see, in the thick walls of the adjoining houses, the rings to which the fishermen of the lake used to tie their boats.

After crossing the plain, the road, protected by enormous piers which restrain the fury of the Romanche and the Vénéon, enters the second defile, which is longer and more magnificent than the first. We are now in the heart of the range and the deep bed of the stream is bounded on the north by the walls of Grandes-Rousses (3473 metres) and on the south by those of Meijde (3982 metres). The first portion of this defile is known as the Gorges de l'Infernet and later on it is called the Gorges de Malavalle; thus does the terminology of the inhabitants recognise the





*On the Plateau de Paris : Meidje and Rateau.*

wildness of their country. From time to time, beyond the precipitous slopes, you can see strips of cultivated ground, houses and a few spires, and you cannot refrain from wondering how people can live in such a place, even during the best season of the year. The narrow gorge widens a little into a plateau at an altitude of about 1290 metres, and there you find the village of Freney. When you have entered the mountains again, you catch a glimpse, every now and then, of the glitter of strips of glacier which look as if they had been cut out of the vast cupola of the glaciers of the Mont de Lent.

About 100 yards or so above the present road there is, between Freney and the plateau of Bons, an almost perfect fragment of the ancient Roman road. It is chiefly worth seeing for the sake of the simple but impressive monument, the Porte Romaine, which is cut in a spur of the rock, but half of it has unfortunately disappeared. The track of the ancient road can easily be discerned for a distance of over a mile, from the Col du Chatelard to the Calvaire du Mont de Lent.

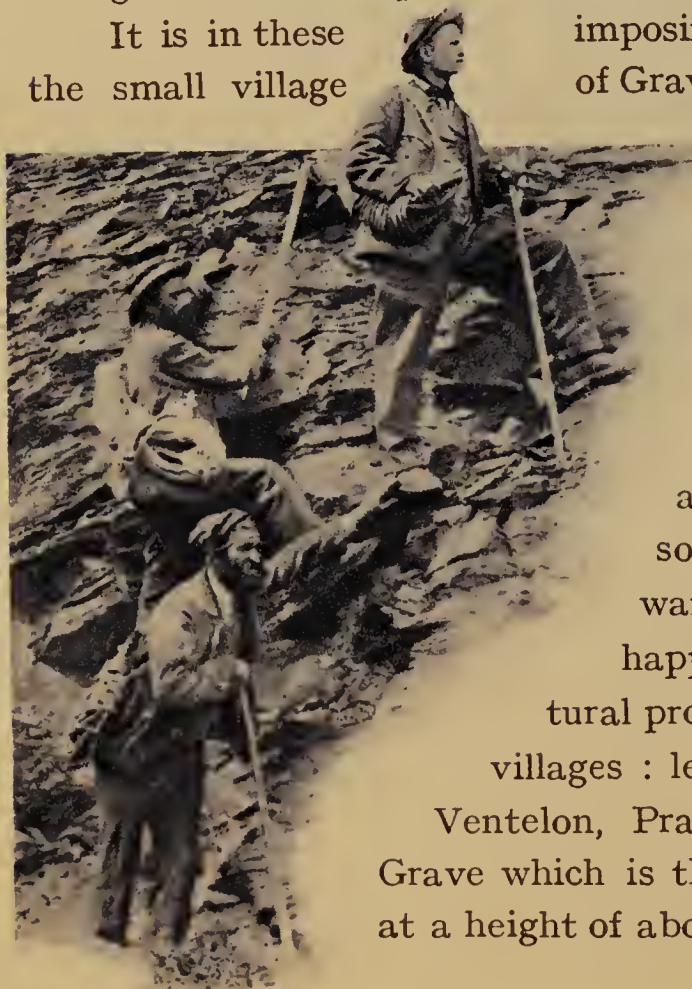
Beyond the little plain of Chambon, the Gorge de la Romanche

assumes an appearance of savage desolation. The trees can no longer manage to insert their roots into the solid rock and there is only one plant which prospers in this area and that is the sweet-smelling lavender, which the children offer in bunches to every passer-by.

At the top of the walls which limit our vision there are a number of plateaux of grazing land, from which little streams descend to the right and to the left in charming cascades

and before long the visitor, looking towards the South-East, comes in sight of the sharp peak of the Grande-Meidje.

It is in these the small village



*Oisans Guides.*



*On the Tabuchet Glacier.*

imposing surroundings that you approach of Grave. Although, through the accidents of a stupid demarcation, Grave belongs to the Département des Hautes-Alpes, it is really the second capital of Oisans. It belongs to a continuation of Grandes-Rousses, which culminates here in Signal de Goléon (3429 metres), and a vast plateau sloping towards the south descends from the summit towards the bottom of the gorge. Its happy position marks it out for agricultural prosperity and the plain is covered with villages : le Chazelet, les Terrasses, les Hières, Ventelon, Pramélier, etc. They all centre round Grave which is the most important. Grave, which lies at a height of about 1526 metres and is well above the





*Meidje seen from Grave.*





*Col du Lautaret.*

road where the numerous hotels are, has become the centre for Alpine climbers in the upper valley of the Romanche. It is the starting point for climbers who wish to see the magnificent view from Goléon, for the ascent of the southern pinnacle of Arves (3509 metres) and above all for the famous Meidje, whose peak, surrounded by glittering ridges of ice, has an altitude of 3982 metres. A tribe of guides, who show clearly that they belong to the stock of men like Pic, Mathonnet, Faure, etc., swarm round the Juge and Tairraz hotels, and, armed with the diploma of the Société des Touristes du Dauphiné, they can conduct the visitor who is greedy for new emotions and longing for excitement up every peak on the horizon.

Less venturesome visitors can go by a good road to les Terrasses, and enjoy there a finer panorama than they have seen from the cemetery, and if they go as far as the Prés de Paris, where certain archeologists claim to have found more traces of the Roman road, they will be rewarded by a magnificent view of the whole chain of Meidje and of Rateau, with their glaciers descending their sides. The main road, part of which passes through tunnels, continues for about two miles to follow the course of the





*Towards Meidje : Refuge de l'Aigle and Rocher Sud de l'Aigle.*

Romanche, and it then comes to the village of Villard-d'Arène (1651 m.) and soon afterwards leaves the river to descend in zig-zags down the grassy slopes which lie to the east. The stream bends to the south and winds between the slopes of Meidje on the west and Combeynot on the east, and its course reveals a view of a splendid outline of snow and rocks which is the crest of the Glacier-Blanc. The higher you climb the more amazing does the view become and at one point the magnificent fanshaped glacier of the Barre des Ecrins appears above the nearest ridge. But it is only a glimpse; the road widens, the slopes of l'Aup-Richard shut off the picture and



*Allemont  
and Grandes Rousses.*



*On the Arsine Glacier.*

you arrive at the Col du Lautaret (2072 m). The Roman road once passed over this hill and its builders erected a small temple there, Altaretum, hence the name of Col de l'Autaret, which was corrupted into Lautaret. The ancient temple afterwards became a hospice and when it had been enlarged and made more comfortable, was transformed into a big hotel.

From here there extends, almost as far as you can see, a rocky plateau covered with turf, on which grows a famous flora and botanists first made the reputation of this spot, which is now kept up as an Alpine garden.

You have now reached the real limit of Oisans which extends from the basin of the Romanche to Briançonnais on the other side and here we leave the district of which Grenoble is the centre.

You must now leave the road which, as usual, is a modern adaptation of the old Roman road, and goes down the valley of the Guisanne to Briançon. You must even forego the magnificent road of Galibier, and turn back in order to have a look at a side valley, which gives another view of the enormous mass of Grandes-Rousses, along whose southern base you have travelled so far.





*On Grandes Rousses : the Saint Sorlin Glacier.*

At the exit from the first gorge of the Romanche, the entrance to the plain of the town of Oisans, you saw to the left a picturesque valley, through which flows an important tributary of the Romanche, called the Eau-d 'Olle.

The little village of Allemont rises on a sunny peak near the confluence of these two streams. At its feet, where the plain narrows, you can see large buildings round which the small hamlet is grouped. It is the ancient foundry, an old metallurgic establishment which has passed through many vicissitudes of fortune. Several attempts have been made to exploit the argentiferous minerals which are to be found in certain layers of rock at Challanches, which is four hours walk into the mountain. The gorge which commands Allemont seems to be the geological continuation of the gorge of the Romanche, because it likewise follows the eastern base of the first chain of the Dauphiné Alps and it runs always between the ridges of Belledonne and Sept-Laux, on the western side of Grandes-Rousses.

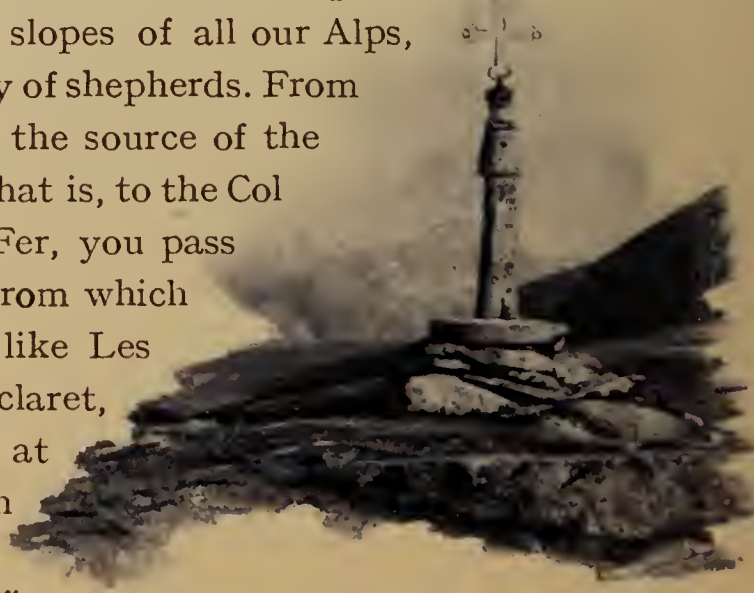
The connecting road follows the level of the Eau-d'Olle to where branch roads lead to the west to Oz and Vaujany, through pretty villages



*Aiguilles d'Arves seen from Ouillon.*

which lie on the sides of Rousses. Then in a narrow defile, which rises by a steep gradient to an altitude of 1300 metres, it reaches the hamlet of Rivier-d'Allemont, a centre of secondary importance from which roads lead to Pas-de-la-Coche and Sept-Laux. It is also the starting point for the most difficult ascents of Belle-Étoile and the Col-de-la-Vache.

The river which tumbles down from Sept-Laux in a magnificent waterfall marks the beginning of a curious passage, which ends close to Grand'Maison. Here you reach, in the higher mountains, the pastoral tract which is to be found on the first slopes of all our Alps, and Grand'Maison is a very ancient colony of shepherds. From here to the end of the valley, as far as the source of the Eau-d'Olle and to the edge of its basin, that is, to the Col du Glandon and the Col de la Croix de Fer, you pass over the gentle slopes of a wide plain, from which there rise, at intervals, small villages like Les Quatre-Maisons or Rifclaret, le Soleil, Arclaret, le Plan du Col, les Ribauds. Here you are at the foot of the highest crests of both



*Col de la Croix de Fer.*



ranges, but as usual their first spurs hide the top from view, and you can only see, through the dips in Grand'Maison, the glaciers and peaks of Cochette (3270 m.), the northern satellite of the Étendard, the culminating point of Rousses (3473 m.), and above Quatre-Maisons the ridges of Argentière.

Quite close to the Col du Glandon (1980 m.), which overlooks the glistening valley of Villards, the Club-Alpin has built a small hotel 1960 metres above sea-level, which serves as a centre for exploring the surrounding mountains. There is an easy and pleasant path, which leads through the fields on to the ridge of Ouglion (2456 m.), from which there is a splendid view over the valleys of the Maurienne, which winds at its feet, over the three Aiguilles d'Arves, the great glaciers of Saint-Sorlin and Étendard as well as over the whole of the eastern slopes of the Allevard mountains.

The road continues for another two miles or so and reaches the Col de la Croix de Fer (2062 metres), which overlooks the valley of Arves and all the charming country of southern Savoy.

And Grandes-Rousses, which we have now seen from both its principal aspects, demands our attention from yet another angle.

Opposite the town of Oisans, streams descending from the western and southern glaciers combine to form the great waterfall of Sarène. The valley from which it falls goes up to Garde, where Roman remains have been found in the ancient village of Huez, and it continues to a district which is now-a-days pastoral, but is the source of strange traditions and historical relics. I refer to the mountain and the town of Brandes. Although it is situated at an altitude of more than 1800 metres, it was an important mining centre, a fact which



*Lake Lauvitel.*

is proved by enormous mounds of rubbish and the large shafts which were sunk. For the most part they are now fallen in and inaccessible, but they were visited and described by Héricart de Thury, at the beginning of the xixth Century. Tradition credits the Romans with their discovery and their intensive exploitation, and history proves that these mines furnished a considerable revenue in the time of the Dauphins. There are still a large number of ruined miners' huts, and to this day you can see, on the rocky spur called Lou Montossa, the ruins of a tower whose thick walls are surrounded by a deep moat. It goes by the strange name of Tour du roi Ladre, and it used to be the residence of the governors of the mines. The vein, which seems to have been quite rich, was exhausted in the xvth Century. Since then the mines have been abandoned and, as often happens, they have become the subject of all kinds of legends.

The region of Oisans is streaked with veins of all kinds of minerals but the inaccessibility of their situation makes profitable exploitation impossible.







*View of the Lake.*

## CHAPTER VI

### The Mountain District.

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#### *La Bélarde and la Vallouise — The Glaciers of Pelvoux Meidje and les Escrins*

The range of Pelvoux is the citadel of Oisans. Its orographic formation is the shape of two horseshoes joined together like the letter X, and the highest and most dangerous peaks which stand on the territory of Dauphiné face each other here.

The usual approaches are on the west side through the valley of the Vénéon with Saint-Christophe and La Bélarde as centres and on the east the valley of the Gyronde more often called the Vallouise. There



*Aiguille du Plat de la Selle and Bourg d'Aru.*

are two further approaches of secondary importance between the branches of the X, on the north through the valley of the Alpe (Haute Romanche) and on the south from the Val Gaudemar.

The valley of the Vénéon would appear to be the natural extension of the plain of Oisans at whose southern end it lies. The juncture of this river and the Romanche brings together a large number of little springs from the top of the mountains. The old road runs along the left bank and is constantly exposed to the danger of landslides from the outlying slopes of



*Dans les Grandes Rousses :  
le lac La Fare.*





*Étages.*

Rochail. The right bank of the river is bordered by the steep slopes of Ferrarey. The first village along this road is Ougiers. A picturesque bridge over the Vénéon tempts the traveller to cross to the other side and if he yields to his curiosity he will not be disappointed because behind a kind of bank there lies Lake Lauvitel, an emerald lake in which the glaciers

of Brèche de Valse-nestre and of Peyron are reflected.



As you go up the valley you turn round a bend of the gorge from which you see outlined against the sky a high peak covered with ice : it is the Aiguille du Plat de là Selle

*La Bévarde.*

*Rouies.*

which rises to a height of 3602 metres. A short and rocky defile precedes the expanse where Venosc stretches its soil to the sun. It is an old village with a queer name and its houses are grouped near the bottom of its sunny slopes which lead to the Col de l'Alpe. The new road leaves it on one side and thus transfers the traffic and the importance of the place to its old neighbour, the village called Bourg d'Aru. Although the name has been twisted into Bourg d'Arud, the origin can easily be traced to the local dialect, it is the bourg du ru, du ruisseau, and in fact it clusters about the bridge which is at the bottom of the valley that rises from it.

You are here at the edge of a considerable precipice which must no doubt have been the scene of many a forgotten catastrophe, which has not been related by history. A mass of rock blocks the valley and in places even lies across the stream. Le Clapier de Saint-Christophe gives a sense of desolation to the visitor. In bygone days the course of the river was the only way of ascending or descending the valley and the little track, such as it was, twisted in and out of the rocks and even





*Escrins seen from Agneaux.*

used one of them as the only means of crossing the torrent. The new road has been cut out of the rock by blasting and it gains the higher level of the Plan du Lac by two great zig-zags. There is nothing here of the charming verdure of Chartreuse and of Vercors. Here you behold the bleakness of Oisans in all its nakedness. The stream runs through a small, narrow plateau formerly the bed of a lake, which only dried up comparatively recently. On every hand you see masses of fallen rock and bare precipitous slopes. The Tête des Fétoules gives a touch of beauty to the background, where it raises its double white crest to the sky.

The road winds its difficult way through the detached rock and beyond the site of Fontaines-Bénites it reaches the small plateau of Saint-Christophe, through the opening of the Pont-du-Diable. The white church stands at the beginning of this settlement, which is the chief place in the largest Commune in France. You are here at a height of 1470 metres, the soil is shallow and poor and the harvest meagre and difficult to raise, the inhabitants therefore depend chiefly for their livelihood on sheep rearing. This attitude betrays a lack of foresight,



*Meidje : La Grande Muraille.*

for the most productive portion of the district has been ruined by the sheep and the goats, who have trampled it to pieces, the pasture has disappeared and the whole district is now quite wild. Happily the love of climbing and the passion for the Alps have appeared to provide a new source of income for this stricken district and it is now a climbing centre as important as Grave. Men like Gaspard, Roderon, Rodier and Turc have founded a tribe of guides and, during the summer season, it

is necessary to book their services in advance to secure their company.

In 1920 the road, which had been begun a long time ago, reached Bérarde. It replaces the old mule track with its dangerous windings, and after passing above Granges, Bernardière, Clot and close to Champ-Ebran, it reaches the pass where the three houses of Champforant have been built. The new road has been better planned and it cuts off quite a distance near the village and then rises on artificial supports above the abyss through which the Vénéon flows. After this difficulty has been



*Meidje ; La Grande Muraille.*



surmounted, the road continues to cut across the steep slopes of the spurs of the Aiguilles du Plat de la Selle, and soon afterwards joins the old road and reaches les Étages.

As you approach this little village you suddenly see the colossus of Ecrins rising before you. The delicate snow-clad peak is hardly visible and the picture is chiefly filled by the dark mass of the Pic Lory (4083 m.), rising above Pié-Bérarde, shaped like the ears of a cat, and the crests of Vera Pervoz. Little by little, as you approach these masses, they spread out and grow until they blot out the



*On the top of Ecrins.*



*Climbing Ecrins.*

whole horizon and when you arrive at their feet, surrounded by the foaming torrent of the Vénéon, you have reached Bérarde (1738 m.).

Bérarde, a simple little village of shepherds as its name indicates, has become the Holy City of the Alpine climbers of Oisans. The Société des touristes du Dauphiné has built a hotel here, which is the point of departure for the ascent of all the great peaks. The pioneers of these mountains made Bérarde their centre — Boileau de Castelnau, Coolidge, Duhamel and



*Bans seen from Rocher de la Temple.*

the others — and in their day they had an arduous journey to their credit when they arrived here, but nowadays motor cars set down large numbers of tourists who have come to Bérarde to enjoy its magnificent scenery.

The poverty of the district is painful; it is composed of great masses of rock and loose stone, in the midst of which it is difficult to distinguish the chimneys of the village, and wild torrents and stretches of glacier complete the picture. The district of Bérarde has recently been classified as a "Parc National". It is to be assumed that under the wise guardianship of the Department of Forestry nature will soon be healed of all her wounds.

Two valleys join here: from the north comes the valley of Étançons, from the south the valley of Pilatte and into each of them run other important valleys, such as those of Bonne- Pierre and Chardon.

The valley of Étançons begins at the foot of the southern walls of Meidje (3982 m.) and it was from here that in 1877 the first successful attempt to scale the terrible height

*Grande Ruine and Pic Gaspard.*





was made by M. Boileau de Castelnau, guided by two local men, the father and son Gaspard.

The valley communicates with Grave via Brèche de la Meidje, a narrow passage 3300 metres high, and with Villard d'Arène, via the Col du Pavé (3495 m.), or else by the easier route which takes you along the Clos des Cavales (3128 m.). The valley of Bonne-Pierre, which runs into it, gives access over the difficult Col des Escrins (3415 m.) to the northern side of the Barre des Escrins (4103 m.) and to the vast expanse of the Glacier Blanc.

The valley of Pilatte leads to the Barres des Escrins (4103 m.), to Aléfroide (3959 m.) to les Bans, les Rouies, etc., and it provides a means of reaching la Vallouise, over the Cols de la Temple and du Sélé, you can also reach the Val Gaudemard over Chardon and Says.



*Pic de Neige Cordier.*



*Summit of Pic Coolidge looking towards Pelvoux.*

The approach to the Tête de la Maye (2522 m.) has been made easy and gives the visitor a marvellous panorama, embracing the valleys which radiate out from this point and displaying the peaks which crown



*Montagne des Agneaux.*

them. It is a spectacle of unrivalled grandeur and this wild scenery, where the jagged rocks harmonise with the glaciers and waterfalls which alone flourish on them, produces an unforgettable impression.

The line of the ridge is also a line of demarcation in the character and colour of the scenery. After passing the Col de la Temple you can see quite easily the old passage which was lost, after it had been used for a considerable period, until the year 1844, when it was rediscovered by a chamois hunter.

It must be confessed that the change is not very abrupt and, after passing the crest, you descend the steep mountain walls in a tunnel, at the bottom of which you see the Glacier Noir again and you are clearly still in the domain of the rocks. But the smooth expanse of Pelvoux (3954 m.), which is outlined before you eyes, is less severe and reflects a warmer light, and you feel that you are once more on the sunny side of the mountain.



The extremely long stretch of the Glacier Noir, hemmed in by the mass of the Pic Coolidge (3756 m.) and Escrins on the left, and those of Aléfroide and Pelvoux on the right, ends at a place ironically called Pré de Madame Carle, where several larch trees, which subsist here by a miracle, give us a foretaste of the Vallouise. At the end of this little plateau the old moraines which border the stream of Saint-Pierre, are covered with luxurious vegetation — the austerity is tempered by the



*Glacier de Bonne Pierre  
and the Muraille de la Barre des Escrins.*

delightful green — and thus you arrive at the plateau of Aléfroide, which marks the beginning of the exquisite Vallouise.

The valley which is formed by the junction of the Glacier Noir and the Glacier Blanc meets here the valley of Celse-Nière which comes from the Col and the Glacier du Sélé, and receives all the streams which drain the southern slopes of Pelvoux. Their siltings have formed a plateau, which was, no doubt, a lake once upon a time, but is now covered with a thick growth of grass, dotted with clumps of large larches. The contrast between the

dark rocks of Petit-Pelvoux and this green plain is most delightful. A small village with a tiny hotel adorns this oasis, which needs only to be known to be invaded.



*Meidje seen from Étançons.*

Then the valley narrows down into a magnificent forest of larches, through which the road winds its way and the torrent of the Gyr tumbles down its many waterfalls. This enchanting journey seems all too short before you arrive at the bottom of the slope, at the village of les Clots, and there you behold the fertile Vallouise where it joins the valley of Échauda.

You are faced by a long valley, which lies basking in the direct rays of the sun and, in spite of its altitude of 1200 metres, contains the villages and the rich fields of the Vallouise. You pass in succession les Clots, Saint-Antoine, le Sarret, le Poët, grouped together under the common name of Pelvoux. The large well-built houses with their projecting roofs and balconies facing south give an air of prosperity to the villages. Beyond Rière-Pont you cross the stream which becomes the Gyronde and you arrive at the chief town of the valley called Ville-Vallouise.

The country is enchanting, the fields are fresh and green and the waters glisten. Half-way up the hillside lie the charming terraces of Alberts and a beautiful forest of pine trees crowns the ridge of the mountain, which bounds the exquisite paradise of the Vallouise. Further on the little plain bends towards Vigneaux, where it narrows and becomes





*In the shelter of the Carrelet.*

a gorge and then its charm disappears, for it loses itself in the rocky district, which is known as la rocailleuse Durance.

It will be seen that the two main slopes of the range offer very different attractions; the valley of Bérarde is majestic, while that of Vallouise possesses a much gentler charm. The character of the latter is very unusual in this region of high mountains and the two other slopes, le bassin de l'Alpe and the Val Gaudemar, share the severity of the valley of the Vénéon.

This severity, which over-awes the new-comer, has for the initiated, for the real Alpine climbers, a charm which lures them on to run the wildest risks. The mountaineer loves his paths to be difficult and it is the most dangerous and the highest which excite him. The magnificent wall of Meidje, the impressive Barre des Escrins, the innumerable peaks crowning the ranges of Pelvoux and Escrins offer him the most difficult and the most famous ascents.



*Le Père Gaspard.*





*The Approach to Uriage.*

## CHAPTER VII.

### Uriage-les-Bains — Belledonne.

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*Uriage-les-Bains — Its surroundings — The Springs and the Casino —  
Excursions : The Château, Prémol, The Waterfall of the Oursière,  
Chamrousse, Belledonne.*

In such a mountainous country which contains a large number of ordinary springs, it is not surprising to find a number of thermal waters.

At a short distance from Grenoble, in the pleasant folds of the hills, the charming Town of Uriage offers health and distraction to bathers and visitors. Although the manuscripts which have been handed down to us show no evidence, its saline and sulphurous waters were undoubtedly known to the Romans and the excavations made to carry off the springs have revealed very important remains, piscinas, a tepidarium and



*The Park of Uriage.*

numerous votive offerings, proving that the hot springs were frequented in ancient times.

Whatever buildings were here during the Roman period were destroyed during the violent struggles which followed the fall of the Roman Empire and they disappeared without leaving any trace in the memory of man. During the Middle Ages a fortified stronghold was built on the bog where the waters stagnated. The spring, although it was obstructed, did not dry up and some peasants who were ill went to bathe there. Guy Allard has mentioned this fact, which was described by Doctor Nicolas in the year 1786. Towards the beginning of the xixth Century Madame la Marquise de Gautheron, the heiress of Alleman and Largon, constructed a few baths there.

Her nephew and successor M. le Comte Louis de Saint-Ferriol was the real founder of Uriage and he devoted his life and fortune to it. Thanks to his efforts the bog was drained and the spring was located. He designed a park, conceived the idea of the resort much as we see it to-day and built the first hotel. His children continued and perfected his labours and the therapeutic value of the waters has been soundly





*Château d'Uriage.*





*Château d'Uriage and Colon.*

because of the unquestionable efficacy of its waters, partially because it has become fashionable and also because of its intelligent management. The fame of its cuisine attracts the gourmet, the site of its casino delights the idler, and those who are fond of sport may enjoy the pleasures of shooting, tennis, golf and racing.

Since the electric

established, with the result that Uriage has become one of the most fashionable watering-places.

Round the spacious park, crossed by avenues and clumps of trees, pretty villas and hotels are dotted about in artistic confusion. All round, this attractive place, rise the shady and wooded slopes of the mountains. The bathing establishment is situated on one of these slopes and above it, rising almost perpendicularly above its central court-yard, the solid towers of the old feudal castle appear against the sky.

Uriage has become a pleasure resort partially



*Seiglières.*



tramway only takes forty minutes to reach Grenoble Uriage seems to be almost an annexe of the town. The hotel proprietors were so much afraid of this that for a long time they made strenuous efforts to oppose all facilities of transport. Experience proved that their fears were unfounded and Uriage has its own life and a large number of constant and faithful visitors.

The surroundings of Uriage have benefited by its prosperity and Saint-Martin-d'Uriage and Saint-Nizier-d'Uriage, where many villas have been built, are particularly

sought after by families during the holidays. There is active competition

to rent these villas during the summer season, by those who enjoy the purer air of the country-side. In the other direction the various hamlets of Vaulnaveys have also erected many hotels and the tramway, which stops there, enables their visitors to receive

*Lake Luitel.*



*The Ruins of the Chartreuse de Prémol.*

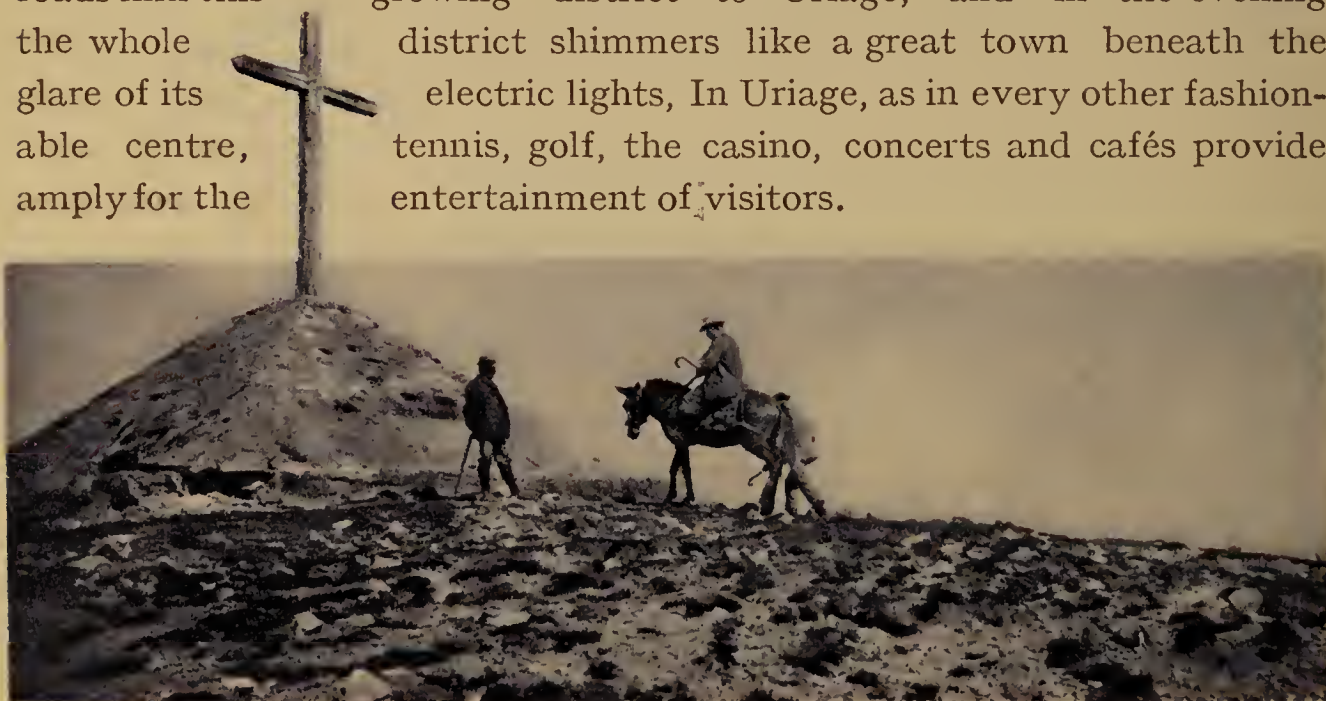






*Towards Chamrousse : Roche Béranger.*

treatment at Uriage. At Albergues, luxurious villas have sprung up round a hotel fitted with every modern convenience. Wide, well made roads link this growing district to Uriage, and in the evening the whole district shimmers like a great town beneath the glare of its electric lights. In Uriage, as in every other fashionable centre, tennis, golf, the casino, concerts and cafés provide amply for the entertainment of visitors.



*The Cross of Chamrousse.*

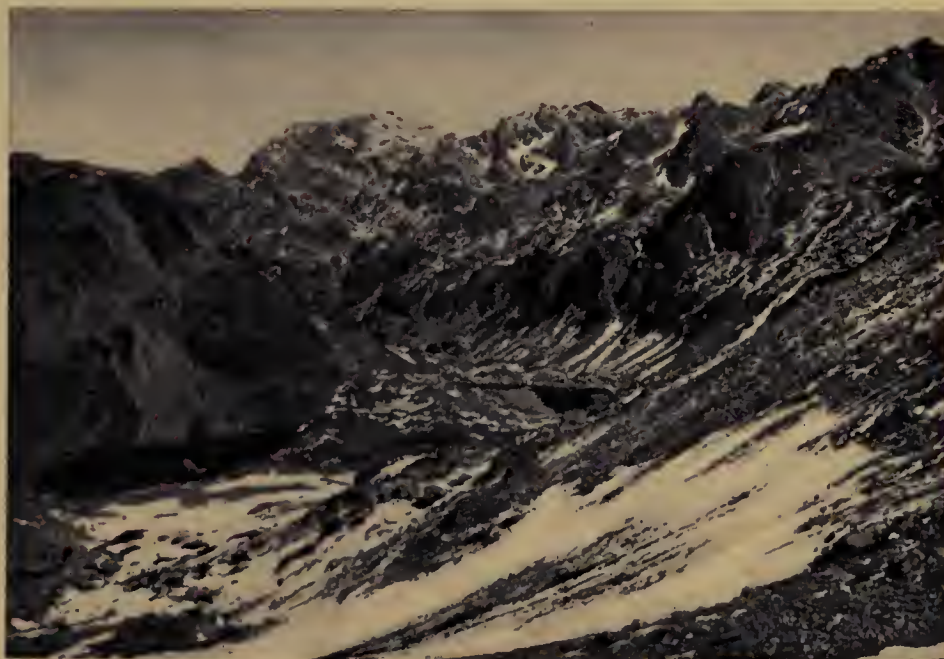




*The Cross of Chamrousse seen from Grenoble.*

But the real lovers of nature find in the mountains' around it the profoundest satisfaction for their tastes.

Those who are less active can take a gentle walk up to Villeneuve-d'Uriage, where they may enjoy a charming view, or they can just stroll to the Château of Uriage which, on certain days, generously opens its portals to allow visitors to admire the collection brought together by the cultured founder of this resort. Happy parties, who are not frightened by a walk of a few hours, go through the chestnut groves of Belmont and through delightful forests to



*Vaudaine*

*and Grande Lance de Domène seen from Lake Robert.*



enjoy themselves amidst the romantic ruins of la Chartreuse de Prémol. A number of arches, which are still standing, and the foundations of the cloister and of the chapel are all that time and the more destructive hand of man have left of one of the most flourishing nunneries which ever existed in Dauphiné. The place is quiet, pretty and restful like all religious retreats. A small forester's hut is permitted to serve food, and the ancient ruins, which once upon a time echoed only prayers, resound throughout



*The Chalet and the Forest of the Oursière.*

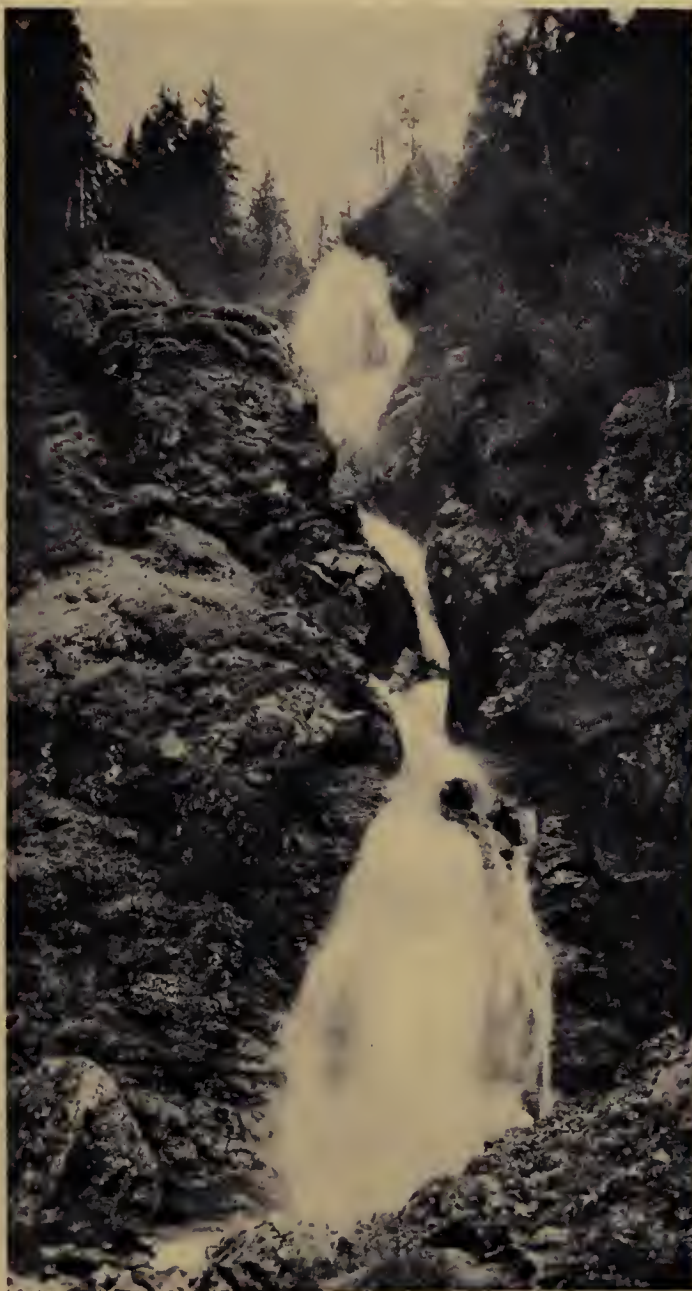
the summer season with the laughter of its visitors. The bolder spirits continue along the wooded road to the Col and Lake Luitel, where, by a stretch of imagination, they can believe that they are amongst the high mountains.

The walk to la Cascade de l'Oursière is a little longer but also very popular, and it can be reached on the back of a donkey or a mule. This method is so much in favour that you can often see the strangest assembly of mounts before the small chalet by the waterfall. This chalet is a res-



restaurant, not because, as in Switzerland, you have to pay to see the waterfall, which is too large to be easily hidden, but because the parties which visit it are not composed of ascetics and they believe that they can appreciate the scenery better while partaking of their favourite liquor.

From both the Chartreuse de Prémol, and the Oursière waterfall, there are paths, sufficiently wide to allow mules to be ridden along them, which go up across the side of the mountain and meet at an exquisite spot, which is called the Croix de Chamrousse (2255 metres). On a clear day the panorama from it is indescribable. The



*The Oursière Waterfall.*

even those who go to the Pic de la Croix (2913 metres) without attempting the Grand Pic (2981 metres) find themselves the centre of the admiration of their fellow guests.

It is a rare feat to cover the distance from Uriage to Belledonne and back again in one day, and it is moreover unnecessarily tiring. Above the

fact that it is situated at the southern most point of the Belledonne ridge, makes this spur easy of access yet extraordinarily outstanding and from it Vercors, Chartreuse, Grenoble and Graisivaudan display all their beauties to the gaze.

But the achievement which excites the admiration of the guests at the hotels is the ascent of Belledonne, which is the highest point in the ridge and





*Prairie de l'Oursière.*

chalet by the Oursière waterfall a ziz-zag path leads to a delightful spot called the Prairie de l'Oursière, which is between two waterfalls, one of them brings down the water to it, and the larger one falls into the river Doménon, which follows a quiet course through rich grazing land. Round the right side of the mountain the road leads to the Lac Robert and to Chamrousse. The road to Belledonne is to be found at the end of the little plain, quite close to the second waterfall. The road, which is very much used, rises by numerous twists to the top of the crater of the Oursière and opens on to a hilly plateau, called La Pra, which is dotted with small lakes. At the end of this plateau, in a little rocky pass a tiny mountain hotel is perched, which has recently been re-built and comfortably fitted up by the Club Alpin. It commands a fine view and supplies the traveller with food and a bed for the night at an altitude of 2145 metres.

The ascent, properly speaking, begins here. On the first slope there is a well-worn track, which follows along the rapids of the stream and leads to the upper valley, where there are two Alpine lakes, the Grand and the



Petit Doménon. At the end of this valley, which is surrounded by the high crests of the Grande Lance de Domène (2823 metres), the Pic du Grand Doménon (2820 metres), the Grande-Vaudaine, and the Grande-Lauzière, the traveller is faced by a magnificent view and he climbs over a slope of frozen snow, almost a glacier, round the shoulder which supports the plateau and the lake of Belledonne. From there the slope is gentle and easy and the way passes over a rocky ridge before reaching the crest of the Croix de Belledonne, where the wide sweep of the panorama is broken into only slightly by the dusky mass of Grand Pic at the side. All the other peaks in the range lie at your feet and the eye can travel without obstruction to the magnificent ridge of Grandes-Rousses and to the shimmering heights of Oisans.

Those who are attracted by Grand Pic can descend into the abyss which it over-hangs by a path, whose danger is somewhat lessened by wire ropes fixed to the rock, and they can thus reach the Pic Central (2938 metres) and from there go on to the Grand Pic. It is possible to get



*Vallon de la Pra.*

there with less difficulty by going to the bottom of the valley of Doménon, then making for the graceful saddle in the Col de Freydane and crossing from there over the upper face of the glacier of the same name. From there you reach to the Col de la Balmette and here you tackle the northern side of the Grand Pic, where the ascent is not quite so dizzy.

On the narrow platform, which hangs nearly 3000 metres above sea level, the real mountaineer enjoys an unexampled pleasure. For a con-



*Grande Lauzière.*

siderable distance there is nothing higher, and nothing obstructs his view. As far as the eye can reach he can admire mountains, hills and valleys, and, without giving a useless list of the names of mountains, we may say that from here he beholds the reverse slope of the Alps and can hail the beauty of every peak he knows. Here he feels the vastness of the universe and his spirit rises to the contemplation of the work of God.

Belledonne is by no means the only interesting excursion which can be undertaken from Uriage. The heights of the Alps of Dauphiné offer, in the northern half, other summits which, if they do not command such



wide views, are none the less interesting, like Crêtes du Lac Blanc, Rocher de l'Homme (2788 metres), Sommet Colomb (2694 metres), Grand Replomb (2540 metres). This district is very little known because of the length of the roads which lie between it and the plain. The Société des Touristes du Dauphiné has constructed a mountain hotel, to which it has given the name of its late lamented president, le Refuge Jean Collet, in



*The Three Peaks of Belledonne seen from Grande Lance de Domène*  
a well chosen site at the top of the Boulon waterfall. In spite of its altitude of 1960 metres this chalet is filled with visitors during the summer season and, as it is close to Lac Blanc and therefore to the Glacier de Freydane and the Col de la Balmette, it has become the sister establishment in this district of the Hotel de la Pra (2150 metres) in the west. Climbers delight in passing from one to the other by the mountain way over the Trois Pics. The less ambitious can enjoy the marvellous sunsets from here or they can wander through the lovely fields to what used to be the banks of the Lac de Crop. They can also follow a charming path which leads from here to the Pas de la Coche and enables them either to turn back through the valley of Laval, or to continue towards Sept Laux.



*Lake Crozet.*

This chain of the Alps of Dauphiné, at such a short distance from Grenoble, provides its inhabitants with all the joys and excitements of mountaineering without any trouble. The green swelling hills at the base, the girdle of fir trees, the Alpine pastures and the precipitous heights some of which are even covered with little glaciers, give the country a variety of aspect which makes boredom impossible. Those who have once seen it rarely forego the pleasure of returning there.







*Allevard-les-Bains.*

## CHAPTER VIII.

### Allevard-les-Bains and Sept-Laux.

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*Allevard-les-Bains — Its springs and its factories — The Park and the Bout-du-Monde — The Château de Bayard and the Chartreuse de Saint-Hugon — Sept-Laux and Rocher Blanc.*

Allevard! It is a strangely fascinating name, which immediately suggests an oriental or Saracenic origin to romantic minds: Al-var or Al-vhar perhaps. The cold realism of the old chronicles shows from the will of the Patrician Abbon that Allevard was known in 732 as Aravardum, and we are forced to abandon the conclusions which we would like to have drawn from the rue de Jérusalem and the chalets of the same name. This town is admirably situated in a small valley of the Bréda, between the hill of Bramefarine and the out-lying spurs of the Alps. It enjoys a reputation as a charming watering place and possesses a flourishing industry.



*The Bréda at Allevard.*

Its waters are a new attraction, as their discovery only dates from the first half of the nineteenth century. After various vicissitudes in its early days the riches of Allevard fell to the lot of the powerful Société Générale d'Eaux Minérales et de Bains de Mer and, since then, it has prospered continuously. The Eau Noire, which oozes from a rock in the gorge of the Bréda, has been drawn off and conserved. Since the water are especially beneficial for diseases of the throat, patients drink them or gargle with them in a building erected just by the source. The hydropathic establishment has been built in the town itself, on one side of a beautiful park, the other sides of which are occupied by the principal hotels. The casino, which is an indispensable necessity to every watering place, has been rebuilt twice already and is now a large and fashionable establishment. From the time when a small railway was opened, connecting Allevard with the railway system of the P.L.M. at Pontcharra, the town has had no cause to be envious of the most famous health resorts.

The chief industry of Allevard is the manufacture of steel. The mountains of the district are rich in ferrous minerals, which have



*The Waterfall of the Bout-du-Monde.*



been exploited for a considerable time. In the past, a large number of private companies, who had obtained small concessions, developed the local wealth, by the aid of little furnaces, which were built at various places, such as Pinsot and Saint-Hugon. A Trust has now been formed, which has combined all these



*The Cloisters of the Monastery of St.-Hugon.*

enterprises and has concentrated its efforts in the vast factories and furnaces established in the gorge of the Bréda. This combine has created an important annex at Saint-Pierre-d'Allevard, at the foot of the slopes which cover the veins of the Taillat mines. It has started another centre at Cheylas, which is the junction of its private railway and the P.L.M.

lines. The necessary power is drawn from the Bréda, with the result that the Compagnie des Hauts-Fourneaux et Forges d'Allevard is able to drive its smelting and refining furnaces by electricity.

Not far from the furnaces and half way up the Bréda you come to the famous spot called the Bout-du-Monde. The gorge is filled with huge rocks, down which waterfalls leap, and it narrows to a defile which is altogether inaccessible. The torrent leaps down in furious rapids



*The Gate of the Monastery of St.-Hugon.*

and the dampness of its spray has fostered a rank vegetation. The walk from the weir by the factory along the cool, gradual foot-path, which leads to this part, makes a charming outing.

The course of treatment at Allevard does not occupy the entire time of the visitors, and one of the attractions of the place is the number and variety of the excursions which can easily be made to the first ranges of the Alps of Dauphiné. The well-known writer, Alphonse Daudet, who used to visit Allevard, has placed some of the most delightful scenes in



*Château-Bayard.*

his " Numa Roumestan " here, and he described a visit to Château-Bayard with his inimitable grace.

Close to Allevard is the Tour du Treuil, which is a strange ruin with immensely thick walls, whose origin is obscure.

Another excursion takes you to Saint-Pierre-d'Allevard, where you catch a glimpse of the romantic remains of the château de la Roche-Commiers.

A walk to the Chartreuse de Saint-Hugon has more attractions to offer. It is situated in a neighbouring valley, the valley of the Bens,





*Peaks of Poulet.*

which is an important tributary of the Bréda. The monastery was deserted during the French Revolution and is now dilapidated. It was, however, converted into a private property and, as it is a fair distance from any village, it has suffered less than others from the depredations of the peasantry. The road by which you approach it goes through delightful country, Chapelle du Bard, celebrated for its Kirsch distillery, Pont de Bens with its swift torrent, Arvillard close to Rochette, and so on. Another track via Montgarin and Pont du Diable, with the inevitable legend of its infernal architect, provides a short cut. The site of the ancient monastery, surrounded by pine trees, confirms once again the reputation



*Forest of Combe Madame  
and the Bec d'Arguille.*



*The Peak of the Grand Glacier and Puy-Gris.*

which the disciples of Saint-Bruno enjoy for choosing picturesque retreats.

Allevard-les-Bains can offer only short walks to its visitors. The rugged range, from which the Bréda and its tributaries spring, raises its granite peaks to a height of nearly 3000 metres, and invites mountaineers to embark on some interesting climbs.



The most time-honoured ascent is that of Grand-Charnier (2564 metres). It is the summit of a long range which extends between two deep valleys, the valley of the Bens and that of the Veyton. You approach it through the fields of Collet, and over the Col de Claran, which is a saddle in the ridge. There are tracks which go up to a considerable height and the ascent to the summit presents the mini-

*Curtillard : Fond de France.*





*Sept-Laux and the Belledonne Range.*

mum of difficulty which is indispensable for the amour-propre of mountaineers. As this mountain stands out in front of the main ridge it affords a very wide panorama.

Other ascents from the valley of the Bens, such as those of Grands-Moulins (2497 m.), and Grand Clocher du Frêne (2796 m.), are less popular, but Puy-Gris (2906 m.) enjoys a certain fame. This mountain is shown, by an error in the official maps, as the highest point in the whole range. The boasts of an avaricious guide have surrounded the ascent with legendary dangers. Experience has proved that the difficulties are imaginary, but, for all that, the mountain is a superb pinnacle crowned by glaciers.

For visitors who are not patients, or for those who have

*Lake Cotepeu.*

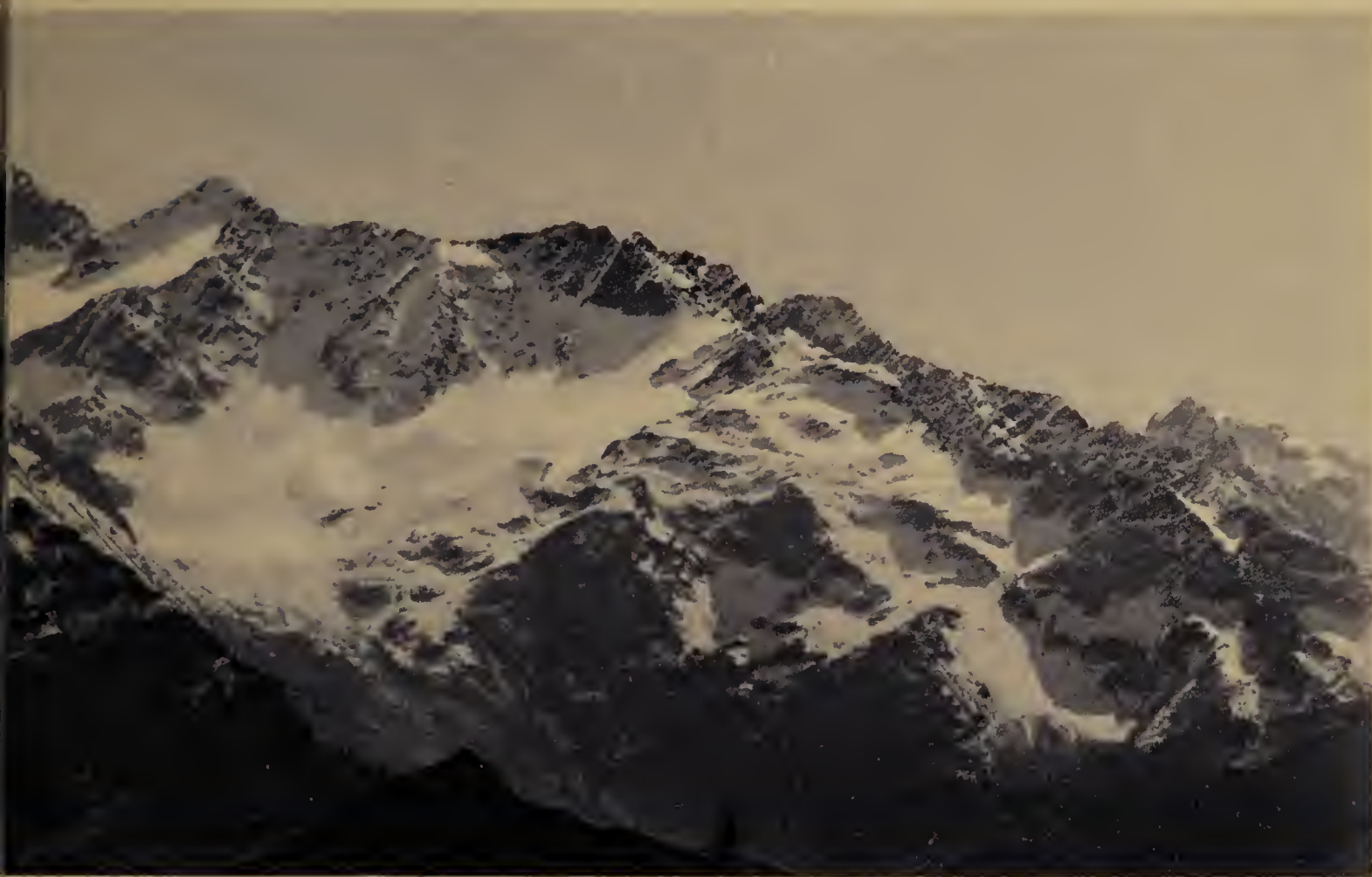


*The Allevard Chain*

recovered their health, there is no excursion to compare with that to Sept-Laux. It may have become fashionable partly because it enables you to boast that you have seen the real Alps and that you have suffered the hardships of mountaineering, but it certainly does afford many charming views. As soon as you have gone high enough to stand above the chasm of the Bout-du-Monde, the path rises to Pinsot, which is a pretty village, standing at the junction of two streams, the Gleyzin and the Bréda. A little further on you behold the fairy vision of the glaciers and the peaks of Gleyzin. You pass by Ferrière, which eclipses its neighbours in beauty, and, as you approach Curtillard, you see a magnificent picture in the distance. The grassy slopes of Fond-de-France, the ridges of Belle Étoile, the dark mass of the spurs which support Sept-Laux, and the fine point of Mouchillon form a harmonious whole, which is very like the mental image we form of the combined grace and grandeur which is characteristic of Swiss scenery.

You can no longer sleep in the rustic chalet on Sept-Laux, but you





*from Grand Collet.*

spend the night, now-a-days, in the comfortable hotels on Grand-Thiervoz or on Curtillard. Carriages and motor-cars can now reach the hotels and even proceed as far as Fond-de-France (average altitude 1100 metres). From there on you must resign yourself to going on foot, or on the back of a mule. A journey of two hours through forests takes you to a level above which no trees grow, but from the chalet on Gleyzin onwards the view gains in variety and holds you breathless with admiration. Near the chalet on Deux-Ruisseaux, a waterfall rushing over an immense rock attracts your eye for a moment before you perceive the extensive and rocky district which is called the plateau of Sept-Laux. The altitude of this district varies from 2000 to 2200 metres, and it extends over an area of three to four miles. The plateau is bordered on the east by the high chain of Pyramides, Eustaches, Agnelin and Bunard, and on the west by the ridges of Belle Étoile (2720 metres). Cradled in its rocky arms, a number of lakes adorn the plateau. The story goes that this desolate

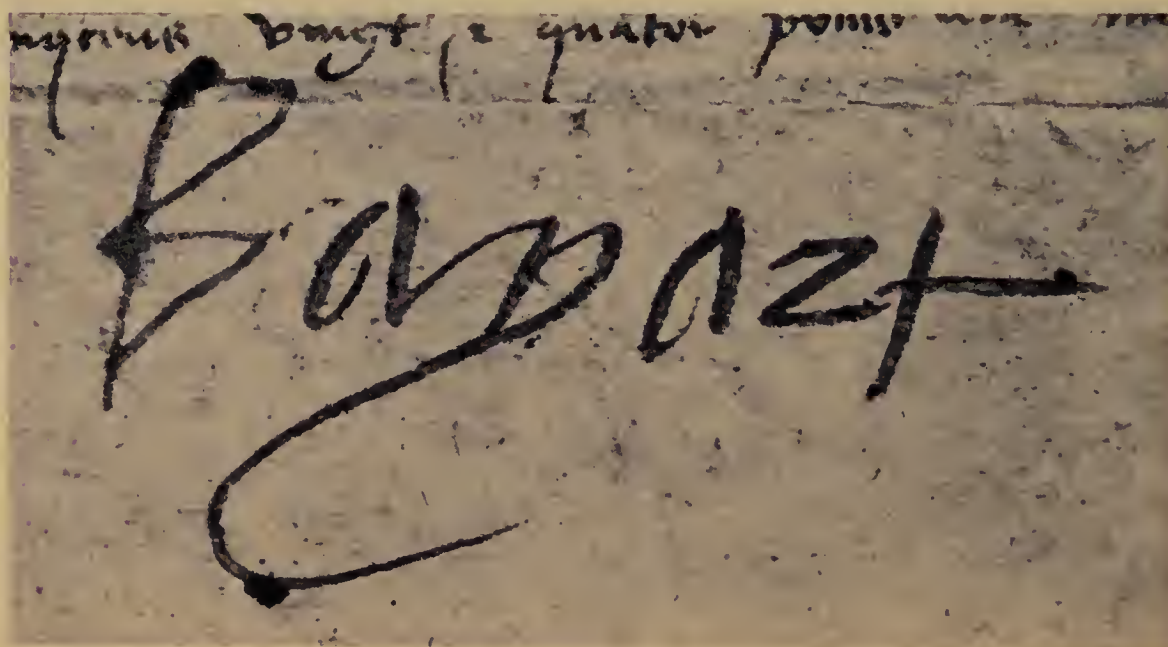
region is formed of the debris from the collapse of some colossal height, in prehistoric days. As you proceed, you pass the Lac Noir, the Lac Carré, the Lac de la Motte and the Lac Cotepeu, before you reach the Lac de Cos, which lies at the end of the plateau. Beyond it you come to the lakes of Corne, Jeplan and Sagne, and as you approach the Pic de la Pyramide you pass close to Lac Blanc. The Sept-Laux are at least nine in number, without counting many other lakes of less importance than those referred to here.

Since 1919 the appearance of some of these lakes has changed considerably, for dams have been constructed to increase the capacity of these natural reservoirs, and their level has been raised by several metres. Moreover, channels have been cut through which the waters of the higher lakes escape into those on a lower level.

The expanse of water has thus been considerably enlarged, and, in the midst of its wild surroundings, it appears even more impressive than of old.

You should make the ascent of one, at least, of the surrounding peaks, especially the most famous of them all, called Rocher Blanc or Pic de la Pyramide (2931 metres). The ascent, moreover, is an extremely easy one. Perched on the top of this great mass, you see ranged round you every mountain in the district, including the glaciers of Rousses, the snows of Vanoise and the glitter of Mont-Blanc.

*The Signature of Bayard (Bibliothèque de Grenoble).*







*Lake de Laffrey.*

## CHAPTER IX.

### Motte-les-Bains and Mataisine.

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*Motte-les-Bains — The Railway to Mure — The Mines and the Coal-fields — Mataisine, Trièves, Beaumont and Dévoluy — Mure, Mens, Corps, Salette.*

The third watering-place in Dauphiné in importance, if not in age, is Motte-les-Bains.

The waters were mentioned by Guy Allard in 1684 in his *Dictionnaire du Dauphiné*. They spring from the bottom of a deep cutting, which has been hollowed out by the Drac. The source is at a height of 330 metres, which is almost on the level of the bed of the Drac, against whose onslaught it has been protected by the erection of a dam. The

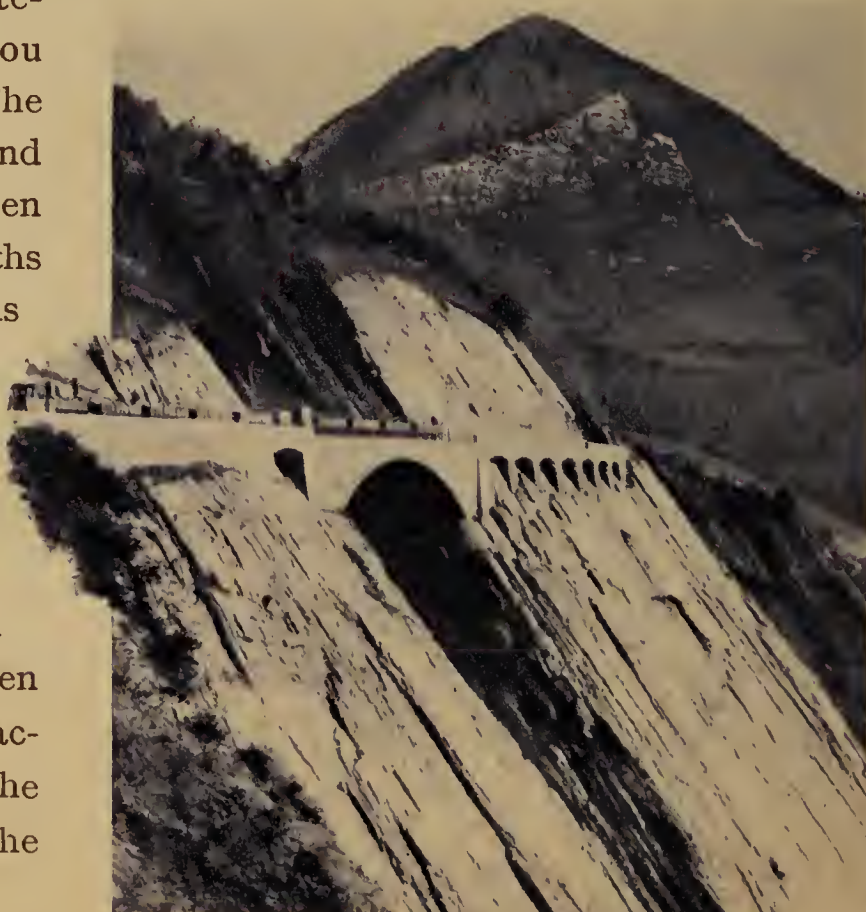


*La Motte d'Aveillans : The pierced Rock.*

water is remarkable, not only for its ingredients and great salinity, but chiefly for its considerable temperature at the source. At one time little use was made of the springs. You had to travel by mule to a small establishment in the hamlet of Pérailler (about 550 metres above

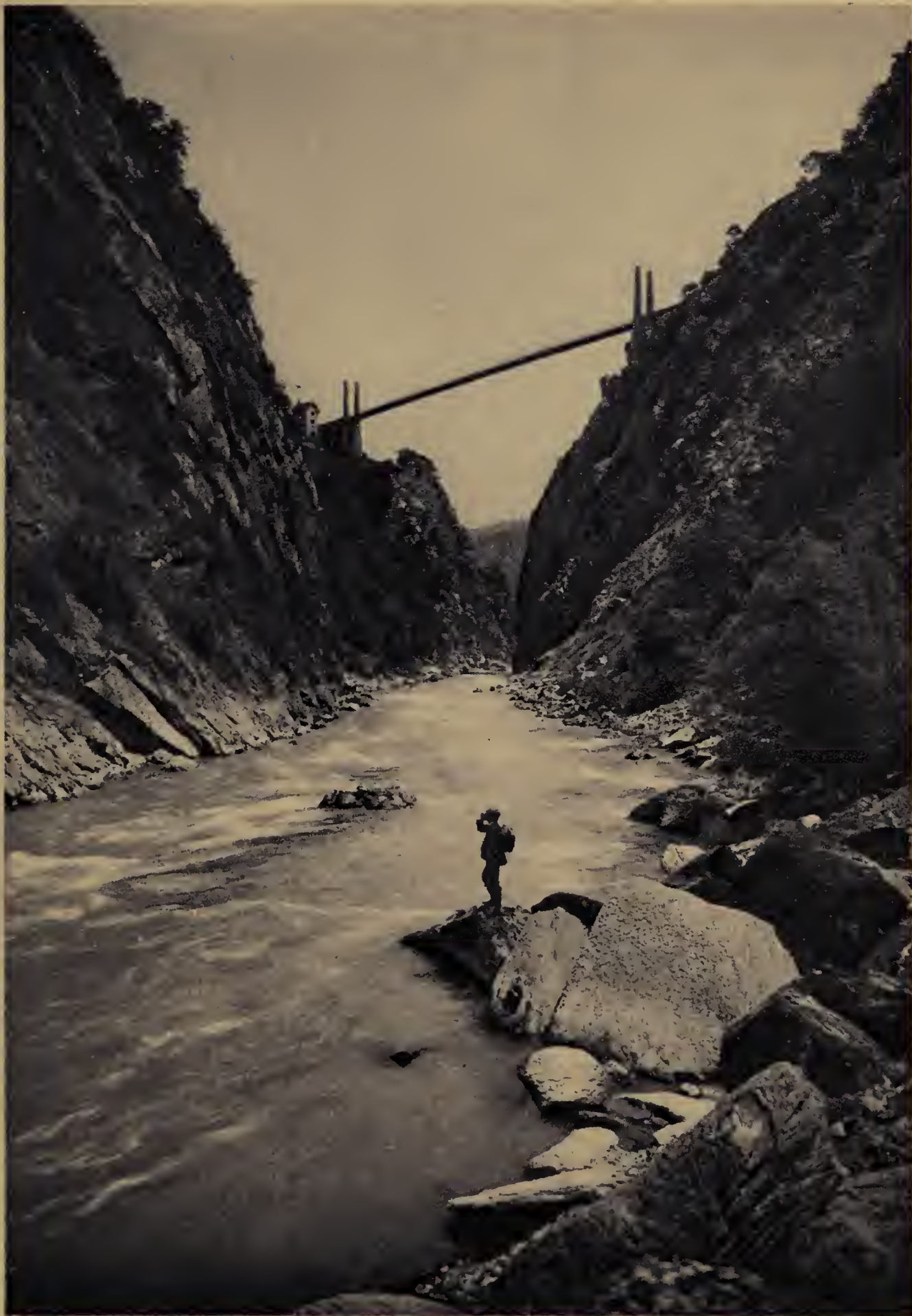
sealevel), where the water was poured into improvised baths.

Close by there is an ancient feudal castle, which stands on a hillock in the valley of Motte-d'Aveillans, and there you used to obtain shelter. The castle is dilapidated and more than half of it has been destroyed by fire. The baths were transferred to this castle and the treatment continued there in as primitive a fashion as heretofore. Nevertheless, the baths exercised a marvellous effect on those who were so stricken with rheumatism as to accept with resignation the primitive conditions of the



*The railway at Mure.*





*Pont de Ponsonnas.*



*Mure and Obiou.*

establishment. Before long the springs attracted attention and they were acquired by a private company, who went to great pains to draw off the water in suitable channels and did everything in their power to make their venture attractive to the public. As a result, Motte-les-Bains, once the hydropathic establishment had been comfortably housed in the reconstructed and enlarged château, made a name for itself which rivals in importance that of many famous spas.

In the old days you had to drive by carriage for nearly twenty miles to get there. The construction of the railway line to Veynes and the opening of the station of Saint-Georges de Commiers halved this distance, and to-day the public travel along the magnificent railroad of Mure to the station of Motte-les-Bains (706 metres above sea-level). The station lies higher than the château (620 metres) and they are connected with each other by an excellent road of some two miles.

Patients are thus enabled to reach the establishment of Motte in comfort, and, as an advertisement once put it, the salutary effect of





*La Salette.*

the treatment is not endangered by an excess of distractions, which are usually found in great health resorts.

It is most regrettable that opposing interests have prevented the execution of a scheme which was conceived in 1844 and has been attempted several times since, by which the waters of these springs were to be conducted to Grenoble or its vicinity. Both Grenoble and the establishment at Motte would have derived considerable prosperity from it had the scheme materialized.

Hot springs always emerge in places which have been subject to violent geological upheavals. There is a large vein of anthracite coal in the valley of the Motte and it is a well-known fact that anthracite is produced by rich vegetation subjected to greater pressure than that which



*Basilica at La Salette.*

produces ordinary coal. There are other places in these Alps where good coal has been found, but nowhere have veins of such magnitude and fine quality been discovered as in the mines of the Motte district. A large number of shafts have been sunk at Motte-d'Aveillans, Notre-Dame-de-Vaux, Peychagnard and others.

Until recently, the mining and the sale of the coal were limited by the difficulties of transport, because a whole regiment of horses was needed to carry it to Grenoble. It was with the intention of developing the local industry that the State determined to build the railway to Mure, and the concessionaires of the mines contributed a large sum towards its construction.

The accomplishment of this undertaking, in view of the extremely rough character of the ground, must be regarded as a marvel of engineering. The section of the railway which makes the greatest impression on the observer is the part which, after leaving the station of Notre-Dame-de-Commiers, is suspended like a balcony on the side of the precipice overhanging the Drac, but you should really admire even more



*General View of Corps and Obiou.*





*Between Saint-Christophe and Valjouffrey : Aiguille des Arias.*

the daring feat of throwing a bridge over the abyss between the two tunnels of Clapisse. The two viaducts over the Oula attract attention, but in the subterranean parts, where you see nothing, are two of the spiral tunnels, which are the pride of the Saint-Gothard line. Only by the greatest skill has this railroad been wrested from the mighty forces of nature, but now the coal industry of the Motte district enjoys the benefits of a regular and speedy train service.

The railway could not be built to Motte-d'Aveillans, in spite of the importance which the considerable development of the mines has given to it. The railway leaves the basin of the Motte by cutting through the mountain and continuing to its provisional terminus at the small town of Mure (822 metres). It is to be continued as far as Gap, and by this time it would have been completed had the war not intervened. Everyone hopes that its destination will soon be reached and that its completion will give a new lease of life to the interesting Alpine districts of Valjouffrey, Valgaudemar, Beaumont and even Dévoluy.



*The Chapel at Valgaudemar.*

The basin of the Drac is a remarkable example of the phenomenon which is called sapping or undermining by the most recent researches of geology. Not very long ago, the river and its tributaries flowed through an immense plateau (with an average altitude of 1000 metres), which then connected the lateral ridges of the Pelvoux range to those of Dévoluy and Vercors by a wide plain. Mysterious geological activity has hollowed out chasms with a depth of three to four hundred metres in the surface of the plain, which, being composed of alluvial soil, offered little resistance. At the bottom of these chasms the Drac, the Bonne, the Ébron now flow. Deep gashes in the steep sides of the chasms intersect the edges of the plain above them, and make it impossible to explore them except by big detours.

The country which has thus been split up formerly comprised a number of small districts, of which the most important were Mataisine on the right bank of the Drac and the Bonne, Beaumont on the left bank of the Bonne and Trièves on the left bank of the Drac.





*The Lavey Glacier and Pic d'Olan.*

Mure is the capital of Mataisine. Mure is a small agricultural town of 3500 inhabitants. Once upon a time it was a fortified stronghold and played an important part during the religious wars, but the struggles which it has witnessed have left no traces of the fortifications. The little town lies in flat country, on the spur of the precipice which is crossed by the Bonne. It is the key to the quaint valley of the Valbonnais and the Valjouffrey. Through this valley Mure communicates with Oisans and even the foot of the marvellous wall of Olan can be reached. Mure also commands the entrance to the valley of Laval dens, which is not visited as often as it deserves. It leads into the very heart of the Taillefer range.



*Lake Pétarel and Olan.*



*The Church of Clot in Valgaudemar,  
Sirac in the Background.*

Trièves faces this range and extends on either side of the banks of the Ébron. It lies, as it were, between the rocks of Dévoluy and the southern slopes of Vercors. The mountain is traversed by the gorges of its rivers and until lately it was so difficult to approach that the visitor was interested only in that part of it where the wooded valley of the Tréminis conceals some charming country. The advent of motor cars, which have surmounted the natural obstacles, have made the district more popular and Mens has become the meeting point of many well worn tracks. Mens is strictly Calvinist, so much so that it is the nominal centre of Protestantism in

Dauphiné. Like its neighbour, Mure, Mens is an agricultural settlement and since it lost its ancient importance the population has declined to, 1600 inhabitants. Unfortunately, they are not able to derive any advantage from the waters of the Oriol, which spring not far from Mens.

The difficulty and the length of the approach to Mens amounted almost to complete isolation. Nowadays a regular motor-bus service, run by the Département, plies between it and the station at Clelles. During the summer a stream of motor cars takes the tourists to the station at Mure, then via Ponsonnas to the wild scenery of Pont de Cognet, and climbing up to St.-Jean-d'Hérans on the left bank of the Drac, they come to a halt in the Place de Mens. Another motor service runs through Monestier-le-Clermont, over the Col du Fau, across the





*Northern aspect of Obiou.*

Ebron at the Pont de Brion, and then joins the service described above, at Mens. You can easily cover the district of Trièves in this way and now that climbers are brought comfortably to the very foot of the rise they are beginning to favour the rugged ascent which rises from Mens along the southern slopes of Obiou, to the gigantic Dévoluy.

On the left bank of the Bonne, Beaumont lies parallel to the terraces of Mataisine. Corps, which is the capital, lies on the road between Grenoble and Gap, or rather Lyon and Antibes. From here you begin the ascent of Salette. Beaumont lies at an altitude of 962 metres and though it is the chief town of the district it is barren of either commerce or industry. The pilgrimages of the large number of faithful Christians, who come from all parts to ascend Sainte Montagne, have quickened its life somewhat, but owing to the difficulties of its approach, most of the pilgrims go to Lourdes, which attracts them no less and which they can reach by railway without any trouble.

Nowadays the district enjoys the benefits bestowed by motor-cars.

They start from Mure or even from Grenoble via Corps; another service, which runs in connection with the above, goes as far as the monastery on Salette (1770 metres).

The road to Dévoluy starts from Corps. This distant region is embedded between the high limestone formations of Faraut, Aurouze, Obiou and Grand-Ferrand. The district has always been desolate, its slopes are barren of trees, and it has been terribly ravaged by the elements. The name is said to be derived from the Latin *devolutum*, undone. Good roads make it possible to go as far as Pellafol, over the Col du Noyer and the Col d'Agnières. The traveller of to-day, who reaches Pellafol in perfect comfort, can afford to believe that the bottoms of the valleys conceal rich pastures, to see in its barren slopes a certain grandeur, and even to credit its peaks with interesting views.



*A House in Valgaudemar.*





*Ski-jumping.*

## CHAPTER X.

### Grenoble in Winter.

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*Winter sports — Snow and skis — Tobogganning and bobsleighing —  
Monestier de Clermont and Sappey — Recoin and Col de Porte —  
Winter scenes.*

Not long ago everyone disappeared into their houses during the winter season in Grenoble. All activity was confined to intellectual labours and distractions. It was the time for concerts and theatres. The aristocracy and the middle classes gave receptions, dinners and balls in their comfortable homes, but this life was restricted to the evenings and people only ventured into the snowy streets when it was absolutely essential. No one voluntarily exposed themselves to the icy north wind. The fête of Saint-Egrève, which was held the day after Easter, was the signal for the resumption of out-door life.



*Grenoble — The Hôtel-de-Ville and Parterre à la Française  
under Snow in the Evening.*

All this has changed since the winter sports have been introduced into Dauphiné. At first snow-shoes were used only by the army and by the foresters; they rendered useful service and there were some bold spirits who thought that by their aid they might visit the mountains, in spite of the thick snow, which, especially when it was wet, prevented ordinary pedestrians from getting there. The use of skis was taken up timidly at first, but very soon they gained general popularity.

Ski-ing is wonderfully suited to winter conditions in Alpine countries, and as soon as the towns-people had got used to them the practice of ski-ing rapidly spread to the out-lying districts. Now-a-days everyone uses skis and it is an amusing spectacle on Sundays and feast-days to see the ticket offices at the station, surrounded by a crowd whose shoulders are burdened with skis. Among the crowd you see occasionally a few people carrying toboggans. Motor-cars have been supplied with a fitting for carrying skis, and on fine days the motor services relieve their patrons of all their encumbrances, whether skis or toboggans, and conduct them to the best centres for the sport.





*Grenoble — Jardin de l'Ile Verte in Winter.*





*St.-Pierre de Chartreuse.*

Monestier de Clermont was the first place to be consistently patronised by skiers, because of its gently undulating plateau. The valley faces north and its heavy snow-falls are therefore kept in good condition, and, when the snow lies three to five feet deep on the ground, the district reveals no trace of its fields and ditches, scarcely even of its hedges. The whole expanse between Monestier and Saint-Paul becomes one smooth plain.

The valley of Sappey extends towards Emeindras; it lies between

the base of Chamechaude and the back of Saint-Eynard and it provides another centre, which is a popular resort for winter sports. As it lies above Monestier, its snows are in admirable condition, and its proximity to Grenoble attracts a large number of visitors.

The public, however, grow more and more exacting. The



*On col de la Ruchère.  
Chamechaude in the Background.*





*Ski-ing at St.-Pierre de Chartreuse — Grand Som in the Background.*

skiers do not feel sufficiently free in these practising fields. They formed the Ski Club, and they forced the local Société Alpine to give ear to their grievances. Special places were sought for, where the lovers of this sport could enjoy themselves undisturbed for long periods. The Club Alpin was the first to solve the problem by constructing in the Recoin de Chamrousse, at an altitude of about 1600 metres, a large hut, which stands at the head of a great plateau of grazing land, which lies between forests and mountains, and provides, to perfection, all the conditions necessary for the enjoyment of the sport. The Société des Touristes du Dauphiné chose the clearings and fields near the Forêt de Porte for the erection of a hotel, placed just below the shoulder of the mountain, at an altitude of



*La Dent de Crolles in Winter.*



*The Descent from Chamrousse via Les Arcelles — Taillefer in the Background.*

1325 metres. It is connected with the main road between Grenoble and Chartreuse by a private road some 500 metres in length. This chalet is



*Forester's House on Prémol.*

situated in the upper portion of a dip, which extends as far as Cottaves. From there the vale rises between the wooded slopes of Pinéa and Chamechaude, and its visitors can enjoy winter sports up to the end of April. The great popularity of this place is





*View of the Grand and Petit Charnier.*

due partly to its proximity to Grenoble and partly to its excellent road. The number of motor driven snow-sweepers is still limited, but they clear the road to Col de Porte, thus allowing traffic to pass freely to the valleys of the Chartreuse. The hotels are kept open during the winter, the tracks are well preserved, and Saint-Pierre-de-Chartreuse will soon be as great a



*Le Trièves : Ski-ing to Chichilianne.*

centre of attraction in the winter as in the summer. Keen competition exists between the various centres.

Winter sports are no longer confined to racing and training by skiers, but the snowy Alps now draw the ordinary visitor, who used to know them only in their summer garb.

On fine and clear days, which often follow after storms, the snow-covered country exercises an irresistible fascination. The white branches of the pine trees in the forests are a wonderful sight, the sun plays on the crystals with which they are laden, and those who are bold enough to go as far as the Prairies de Prémol, or de Porte, return with dazzling impressions. The greatest joy is experienced by those who climb above the forests to the great plateaux which extend over the shoulders of Charmanson and Barioz.

The desire for progress and the search for perfection will yet achieve more. The bolder Alpinists have already extended the domain of their skis to the highest summits of the Alps, and their descriptions of their conquests vibrate with special joyousness. When, by exceptional endurance and daring, man triumphs over the world of snow, he experiences an intoxication unknown to those who only brave the mountains in summer, a supreme emotion which he owes to the all-conquering ski.



*Bobsleighbing on Monestier de Clermont.*



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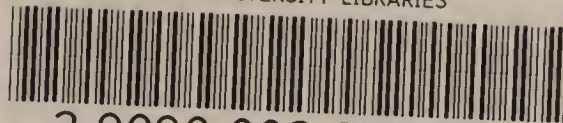
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